

a Research Programme for Skin-related Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

DIORAPHTE - www.dioraphte.nl - a private charitable Foundation established in the Netherlands, has established a fully funded research programme for Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) with a specific focus on Skin NTDs.

Background - NTDs and Skin diseases

Skin diseases are among the most common of all human health afflictions and affect almost 900 million people in the world with five common conditions accounting for over 80% of these. WHO has recently given a higher profile to skin diseases and, importantly, with an emphasis on the skin-related NTDs (<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/83/12/news41205>), including buruli ulcer, cutaneous leishmaniasis, post kala-azar dermal leishmaniasis, leprosy, lymphatic filariasis, mycetoma, onchocerciasis, scabies and yaws (see http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/news/Skin_diseases_integrated_treatment and Hay et al.(2014) and Mitja et al (2017)). Skin diseases rarely cause mortality, rather they disfigure, stigmatise and disable patients, resulting in serious social and economic cost and psychological damage. Despite this, Skin NTDs have attracted significantly less research funding than other NTDs. Most skin NTDs lack drugs, treatments, diagnostics, or vaccines because their discovery and development requires new and improved tools. In turn progress has been limited by a poor understanding of skin immunology, disease pathogenesis, vaccine interactions, and drug pharmacokinetics and pharmaceuticals. The broader implications of more basic, as well as discovery research, on neglected skin diseases include potential for translation into other global infections of concern, such as nosocomial and both multidrug resistance (MDR) bacterial and MDR fungal infections.

References

- 1: Hay RJ, Johns NE, Williams HC, Bolliger IW, Dellavalle RP, Margolis DJ, Marks R et al. The global burden of skin disease in 2010: an analysis of the prevalence and impact of skin conditions. *J Invest Dermatol.* 2014;134:1527-34. doi:10.1038/jid.2013.446.
- 2: Mitjà O, Marks M, Bertran L, Kollie K, Argaw D, Fahal AH, et al. (2017) Integrated Control and Management of Neglected Tropical Skin Diseases. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 11(1):e0005136. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0005136

Priority areas for funding

The Foundation has decided to support fundamental and applied research, but not clinical trials or operational/implementation research, on skin NTDs. In this first call for research proposals on skin-related NTDs the Foundation will give priority to four areas:

- (i) Immunology, pathology or metabolic processes during infection that could lead to improved drugs, treatments, diagnostics or vaccines.
- (ii) Improved models of skin infection to support research into improved drugs, treatments, diagnostics or vaccines.

- (iii) Innovative approaches to the discovery of drugs, diagnostics or vaccines.
- (iv) Role of skin commensals and co-infections in disease.

Proposals that link groups that have expertise in NTDs to those with expertise in skin research, in academic, public or private sectors, are encouraged. Proposals should be for 2 to 4 years with a maximum budget of 850,000 Euros.

Outline of Call Proposal Process and Evaluation

This will be a two-stage call, with:

- (a) **A first request** for a short application (max 5 pages) outlining - importance of the research question in relation to specified skin NTD(s), objectives, research plan, experience of partners, potential impact and outcomes, budget and timelines.
- (b) From the initial submissions up to 5 proposals will be selected and invited to submit **a full application** with the aim of funding two projects. This will also require details of project management, risk management, other funding supporting the team's work, and the next steps to be taken if the research is successful.
- (c) Each group selected for the full application will be awarded up to 5K euros (depending on number of partners) to support a workshop to frame and detail the full application.

Application information is available on the Dioraphte website at the following page; <https://www.dioraphte.nl/en/science-and-research/>

The initial review and evaluation of the short applications will be undertaken by a panel of three scientists with the relevant background, experience and reputation. The full application will be submitted to a further three scientists with the appropriate specialist expertise. The recommendation of the panel will be submitted to the Dioraphte Board for approval.

Timetable

The 1st stage brief application should be submitted to CFP-NTD2019@dioraphte.nl by 31st October 2019.

The 1st stage review process will be completed and successful applicants informed by 29th November 2019.

The 2nd stage full application should be submitted to CFP-NTD2019@dioraphte.nl by 31st January 2020.

Successful applicants will be informed by 29th February 2020.

Further enquiries about the call should be addressed to CFP-NTD2019@dioraphte.nl