



The Morton Cure Paralysis Fund

That All May Walk Again

RESEARCH GUIDELINES

MISSION

The Morton Cure Paralysis Fund (MCPF) is committed to developing effective therapies (cures) for paralysis associated with spinal cord injury and other disorders of the central nervous system (CNS).

FUNDING PRIORITIES

MCPF funds activities that hold promise of identifying therapies (cures) for paralysis in humans. MCPF has particular focus of placing projects in the research pipeline, that is, enabling scientists to develop the proof concept data necessary to apply for larger NIH grants. The development of effective therapies for chronic injury is a high priority for the organization. Basic research will be supported if it has clear potential to accelerate progress at the applied end of the continuum and/or if it reflects innovative research or a 'change of direction.'

The focus areas are:

1. Understanding the effects of spinal cord injury at the cellular level, particularly with emphasis on that which determines apoptosis and/or prohibits regrowth. As stated above, if the proposed project is at this level, it is important that the proposal demonstrate how the project is a change of direction, innovative research or can be quickly moved to therapeutic application.
2. Studying strategies to promote neuronal growth and survival, encourage the formation of synapses, enhance the production of myelin, restore conduction capabilities, or otherwise lead to restoration of the compromised circuitry in the acutely and chronically injured CNS.
3. Evaluating new therapies in clinical trial.

In addition to those elements listed above, MCPF will also take into account projects that:

- Encourage promising new investigators to undertake research on regeneration and recovery, particularly with respect to the spinal cord;
- Encourage researchers who are well-established in other areas to transfer their efforts to spinal cord research; and,
- Enable researchers with novel ideas to test their ideas and develop pilot data for seeking larger awards from NIH and other funding sources.

Either senior scientists or postdoctoral fellows may serve as principal investigators. If the latter, the applicant must submit a letter of support from the laboratory's senior scientist, as well as two other appropriate letters of reference.

RESEARCH GRANTS

Most research awards range from \$5,000 to \$75,000 and are based on one-year contracts. A second year may be considered contingent upon the grantee submitting a six-month progress report, a 12-month progress report and a continuation application that is favorably reviewed by MCPF's Grant Committee.

MCPF encourages research grant applicants to seek support from more than one funding source. Where applicable, MCPF may co-fund projects that have overlapping funding requests approved by another organization.

Applications for research grants are accepted from American or international investigators located at institutions that have clearly established lines of accountability and fiscal responsibility. Applications must include institutional assurances regarding research on human subjects and/or on animals, and must be signed by the individual responsible for administration of the contract. Funds are awarded to the principal investigator's host institution. If the PI moves after the initiation of the contract to a new host institution, all efforts will be made by MCPF to ensure the continuation of the specific research project. However as a small organization, MCPF reserves the right to request reimbursement of our grant if the project is not completed. This provision will be in the contract the institution must sign prior to receiving the grant.

The intent of these awards is to promote innovative and groundbreaking work, not to provide ongoing, long-term support. Awardees are eligible to apply for subsequent funding, but such applications will be reviewed competitively.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Standard Submission Process

Applicants must adhere to priority and submission guidelines using the form supplied. Please include a summary of the curriculum vitae (CV) of the PI and key personnel plus key references. *

We do not want hardcopy. Please email a copy of the file to info@mcpf.org.

Deadlines

MCPF has two semiannual grant periods. The deadlines are April 30 and October 31. Although we generally turn around proposal reviews in less time, please allow 180 days for a decision on your request.

Invitation to Submit

On occasion, an investigator or institution may be invited to submit a proposal for a specific project. Special arrangements for format and deadlines will be made on a case-by-case basis.

* If the application is for a postdoctoral fellowship, submit a full CV for the fellow, and an NIH Biographical Sketch of, and letter of recommendation from, his/her sponsor, and two other appropriate letters of reference. Only one copy each of the letters of reference should be provided in sealed envelopes with the referee's signature across the back flap. They may be included with the application or mailed directly to MCPF office.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

The review process consists of four steps:

Step One: All proposals are given preliminary review by the Executive Director for completeness. Proposals that are not complete will not be considered.

Step Two: Proposals are reviewed for relevance to MCPF goals.

Step Three: Proposals are submitted to scientific peer review.

Step Four: Following these reviews, award decisions are made. All applicants receive notification.

Review Criteria

Research proposals are evaluated on relevance to MCPF's priorities and scientific merit.

Relevance to MCPF's priorities

- Proposals must describe which of the three research areas (Page 1) are being addressed.

If you have questions about the relevance of your work to MCPF's program, it is suggested that you submit a pre-proposal letter, 1 - 2 pages maximum, to insure that the development of a full proposal is warranted. (This letter should describe the proposed research aims, brief description of methods, perceived relevance of research to MCPF priorities, etc.) The pre-proposal letter should be submitted no later than 6 - 8 weeks prior to the application deadline.

Scientific merit

- Adequacy of prior research and theory in providing a basis for the research.
- Adequacy of methods.
- Adequacy of environment: facilities/equipment, available expertise (in-house and through consultants), research 'atmosphere.'
- Qualifications and productivity of the PI and key staff.
- Time commitments of PI and key staff.
- Availability of subjects/patients (if human model is used) and adequacy of safeguards.
- Adequacy of procedures for assessing the effect of interventions on recovery.
- Any other factors that affect the potential of the applicant to address successfully the research aims.

FUNDING LIMITATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- It is assumed that MCPF will not be the sole support for any project. Additional sources of funding, both granted and potential, must be listed.
- Requests to purchase major items of equipment are discouraged. Such funding may be allowed if the equipment reflects the change in research direction embodied in the proposal. If equipment to be purchased costs more than \$2,500, the applicant must explain the need for and, if applicable, the proposed disposition of the equipment following termination of the contract.

- Funding of the PI's salary is not acceptable unless the application is for a post-doctoral fellowship. Exceptions should be discussed with MCPF prior to the submission of the application.
- At this time, MCPF does not provide support for meetings.

RESEARCH GRANTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of recipients of research funding are clearly detailed in the contract signed by MCPF, by the principal investigator, and by the contracting institution. Of particular importance to note prior to application:

- Research contracts are signed for one-year periods.
- Grantees must provide MCPF a six-month progress report and a final report upon project completion using MCPF-specified formats.
- If the PI leaves the institution listed in the grant proposal prior to the completion of the project, MCPF reserves the right to request a return of the grant. (MCPF wants to ensure that the project is completed as agreed.)
- The principal investigator is expected to share with MCPF copies of all publications that emerge as a result of the funded research, during and after the period of the contract. The PI may also be asked to draft a lay-oriented description of the funded research for publication in MCPF's newsletter or for other use.
- The principal investigator is encouraged to make full use of research results using the usual avenues for dissemination (i.e., scientific journals and conferences). **MCPF expects grantees to acknowledge the source of funding (“The Morton Cure Paralysis Fund”) in all such publications and presentations.**
- Publicity releases or other public statements aimed at sharing results with lay audiences must be reviewed by MCPF prior to issuance to insure that such statements are congruent with reports made to MCPF. If a serious lack of congruence is perceived, MCPF will not allow its association with the research to be publicized. MCPF is concerned that results of its funding program be responsibly publicized.
- Research grant awardees must notify MCPF if an application for patent or copyright is being considered to allow us to participate in the application process if we judge this course to be the most appropriate in the given situation.

10/16/03