

Associazione Nazionale Atassia Telangiectasia (ANAT)

CALL FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS YEAR 2021

n. 2 "ANAT Research Grant" of 15,000€

January the 29th, 2021

General introduction

The Ataxia Telangiectasia National Association (ANAT) funds research projects in basic and clinical research with the aim to improve the health status of Ataxia Telangiectasia (AT) patients and ultimately aimed at finding therapies. Research proposals in which translational objectives are evident will be prioritized.

1. Priority areas

1. Pathophysiology in AT and pharmacological approaches designed to correct defective gene or to compensate for its deficient function (*).
2. Identification and validation of new and appropriate in vivo and ex vivo assays to predict and monitor the potential efficacy of new therapies finalized to correct the genetic defect that causes lack of function of the ATM protein.
3. Airways infection in AT patients: pathogenic mechanisms and development of innovative diagnostic and antimicrobial strategies (studies clearly oriented towards possible clinical applications).
4. Clinical applications to slow down AT progression and activities finalised at rehabilitation, care and support of AT patients (**).

NOTES

(*) ANAT will support studies aimed to identify drugs already used in the clinic to treat other diseases for their potential in the treatment of AT patients, provided there is a strong rationale to test them in the context of AT pathology. In addition, studies aimed to identify new compounds will be taken into consideration, provided they suggest new strategies to affect mutated ATM function and/or ATM-dependent mechanisms of cell pathology. Both types of studies may exploit in vitro or ex vivo primary cell models. ANAT will give very low priority to studies aimed to identify hit compounds derived from lead molecules previously reported to potentiate/correct mutated ATM unless the proposal will provide clear evidence that standard preclinical studies will be supported by the host institution, private companies or other sources.

(**) Collaboration and transferring of knowledge and expertise between basic and clinical research are particularly recommended. To this aim, a clinical referring consultant for basic research projects and a basic research consultant for clinical projects should be appropriately taken into account.

2. Eligibility

Only research proposals submitted by Investigators working either in public or private Italian non-profit research Institutions are eligible.

Any person with the role of PI or Partner must clearly play that respective role. Proposals based only on prestige must be avoided. Therefore, here follow the eligibility criteria:

- a) Scientists with proven scientific independence with at least three experimental/clinical papers (submitted manuscripts are not considered) in the field and/or related fields (these papers have to be highlighted in the P.I. curriculum vitae in Form 2) are eligible to apply as Principal Investigators (PI).
- b) The PI should have a permanent position or, in the case of a non-permanent position, they must provide that their contracts cover the duration of the intended period.
- c) The duration of the proposed fund is 1 year, with possible renewal for one extra year.

3. Budget

The budget description must be accurate and every item must be justified.

Eligible costs (all must be clearly related with the project):

- a. Fellowships or research contracts (for graduated and technicians);
- b. Consumables / animals for lab activities;
- c. External and occasional professional or technical services;
- d. Small research equipment or accessories and software (closely justified and related to the current project): not more than 7% of the total budget.

Ineligible costs:

- a. Salary and wages for PI, Co-ordinators, Partners and internal or external Collaborators (with the exclusion of personnel above mentioned for fellowship or research contract);
- b. Wages for staff members already receiving salaries or grants from other sources;
- c. Furniture and stationery articles;
- d. PC and other hardware;
- e. Software not specifically related to the project;
- f. Basic lab or clinical equipment;
- g. Equipment repairing.

Specific Requirements (at the time of grant signature, not for first applications):

- It is mandatory that the Application will be approved by the Applicant's Host Institution.
- Any external appointment at a foreign Institution must be clearly indicated in the Host Institution section and in the related "Host Institution Agreement" document.

- All studies using biological material of human origin and/or involving human subjects must comply with the relevant Italian laws.
- All studies employing vertebrate animals must comply with the relevant Italian laws.

ANAT wishes to remind Applicants and their Institutions that funds are raised through many small individual donations. ANAT therefore bears a special responsibility to oversee an appropriate allocation of funds.

4. Research Project – Guidelines to fill in the forms

The research project must contain all the following information, which must be followed very carefully.

- General information** (Form 1). Project title, name of the Principal Investigator, host Institution, project duration (1 to 2 years), type of application (new application) priority research area, their host Institutions, name of Collaborators (internal and external) really involved in the project and their host Institution and roles in the project. In addition, the main personal data have to be included in the form, personal e-mail address, personal phone, fax numbers and fiscal code.
- Curriculum vitae** (Form 2). Education and training, previous job and research experiences, significant publications in the last 5 years (only peer-reviewed journals).
- Project overview** (Form 3). This must be written in both English and Italian, including title, in a popular and comprehensible style. This abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work, anticipated output, and relevance to ANAT mission; if the application is funded, this summary will be published in the ANAT public documents.
- Aims, background and rationale** (Form 4) Specific aims must be clear as well as the value and the rationale of the project.
- Preliminary results and Experimental plan** (Form 5). Preliminary results must be proved and convincing and refer to the results obtained by the applicant in preliminary investigations. This part will be regarded as absolutely necessary and decisive for the evaluation of the project. Experimental plan must be specified in detail: the research plan, methodology, materials intended to use, justified numerosness of the samples that are going to be examined and the statistical methods that are going to be applied for results evaluation. Moreover, it is requested a description of the development phases of the project, quality controls, and completely pertinent references.
- Facilities** (Form 6). Spaces, equipment, technical systems, technologies and services available for the realization of the project must be detailed.

h. **External and internal collaborations** (Form 7). Define expertise and functions of each Collaborator in the project. Please note that the acceptance of collaboration must be supported by personal collaborator declaration.

i. **Budget** (Form 8) Specify the expenses and describe the budget of the study development. No overheads are allowed.

6. The Evaluation of applications

Incomplete or behind schedule applications will not be processed for evaluation.

In this phase, the Full Application (Core Project plus Supplementary Contents) will be evaluated by the ANAT Scientific Committee members (internal reviewers) and by appropriate international external reviewers.

Reviewers are asked to separately evaluate the proposals on the following two aspects:

A) Scientific merit (is the proposed research excellent?) – the following parameters will be evaluated:

- Link to the disease
- Significance
- Innovation
- Appropriateness of design and methods
- Preliminary results
- Feasibility
- Safety
- Experience of the Applicant in the field and/or related fields.

B) Impact on patients (in the understanding of the disease pathogenesis and/or potential to lead to innovative therapeutic interventions).

All accepted applications would undergo a preliminary review by the Scientific Committee of ANAT on the basis of their relevance to the ANAT mission and the relevance to the priority areas. Projects selected in this triage step will undergo peer review by an international panel of experts. In the final step the projects will undergo the complete review process and will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee, taking in due consideration the independent referees' comments.

Timetable

Applicants whose Application was triaged will be notified by e-mail. The awarding of funds will be discussed during the plenary assembly of the ANAT Scientific Committee held on 30th April 2021.

7. Fellowship and research grants

Awarded funds must be spent to accomplish the research for which they have been approved.

Fellows or contract holders have to be mentioned in any documents or publications as “ANAT fellow/contract holder”. ANAT reserves the right to have direct contacts with the fellows or contract holders, to ask for periodical progress reports on their work in the project and to call them to participate in the annual Convention of the ANAT Scientific Committee in which also the Principal Investigators/Co-ordinators and Partners must participate as ANAT guests. The attendance to the whole Convention is mandatory because it is a working time on research funded by ANAT and not just a general update conference.

8. Awarding and management of research funds

The awarding of funds will be formally decided by the ANAT Board and its Scientific Committee. As a rule, funds are given to the PI Institution where he/she intends to carry out the funded project.

ANAT reserves the right to ask for a copy of the statute of the Host Institution and of the latest available balance sheet, as well as the acknowledgement of the legal status for all the Investigators working for non-profit private organisations. ANAT reserves the right to evaluate the compatibility of the statutory guidelines of the private institutions on a case-by-case basis, with the aim of ensuring social benefit and of the financial reliability in order, if necessary, to dictate the conditions for the assignment/payment of the contribution.

ANAT reserves the right to site visit the Host Institution before releasing any funds and at any time afterwards, during the grant period.

The release of funds is subject to the submission of all required documentation, as specified in the present Call for Applications and as requested the present Grant.

Any changes of the original destination of budget formalized on assignment, occurring during the fulfilment of the project, must be formally asked and agreed with ANAT.

ANAT will not pay any expenses made after the date of conclusion of the project or exceeding the budget assigned. Any costs in excess will be charged personally to the PI or Co-ordinator.

9. Scientific and administrative reports, publications

At the end of each project, the PI or Coordinator must provide a detailed scientific and administrative progress report. At the end of the project, investigators are asked to submit a Final Scientific Report including a list of publications and congress presentations plus the reprints of publications and congress abstracts relevant to ANAT funded project.

ANAT - Onlus must be acknowledged in all publications arising from the funded project (congress abstracts, book chapters, scientific articles, congress slides, press releases...) by specifying the code of the related grant

and by inserting the ANAT logo on both slides and posters. Contextually, ANAT requires receiving a copy of publications and congress abstracts at the following email: segreteria@associazione-at.it.

ANAT may ask investigators to collaborate to public engagement and dissemination of their research results, in order to support fund raising. For this purpose, it is up to ANAT the task of contacting investigators.

10. Research results and intellectual property

ANAT goal is to translate research results into clinical applications available to AT patients. This can be achieved by establishing partnerships with industry, so that the most promising research results can be fully developed into drugs, therapies, devices and diagnostics.

For this reason, ANAT requests that all scientific results derived from a funded project, which have importance for a possible development, are assessed for patent protection and/or commercial valorisation. This can be performed by the funded scientists' institutional dedicated offices (for example Technology Transfer Offices), which provide support and assistance on intellectual property matters and technology transfer activities. In any case, the request for a patent relating to results from projects funded by ANAT must first be discussed with ANAT board and authorized by it. ANAT reserves the right to negotiate in good faith with the funded scientists' institutions its participation in the ownership of intellectual property of inventions derived from funded projects. The funded scientists must promptly inform ANAT in writing of any new patent filings and execution of agreements with for-profit entities related to ANAT funded research results.

ANAT is confident that ANAT-funded researchers will operate with clarity and honesty concerning the attribution of merits relative to any work, invention or discovery.

11. Cover letter and forwarding of application

The documentation must be accompanied by a **separated cover letter**, (signed by the applicant on institution headed paper), in which the PI or Coordinator declares the acceptance of all the conditions specified in the call for application. Moreover, he/she has to summarize the reasons of AT specificity of the proposal, its originality/ innovation/significance in the AT field, and its compliance to the Mission of the Association (possible transfer of results to the management and care of AT patients). He will also have to declare if he/she has any other grants and awards connected with the matter of the proposed project.

Please pay careful attention to the general guidelines in filling in the application forms. The application forms must be written in English (except for the lay summary, which must be both in Italian and English), using single paragraph and not exceeding the number of characters, spacing included, required in each form. Images must be not too heavy, and they must be inserted inside the text near the point to which they relate.

The deadline for submission is **March 27th 2021** (at 12 am)

Applications must be submitted by **E-mail** through PDF files:
cover letter, application (forms 1-8) to

segreteria@associazione-at.it