

Volume 1 / Issue 1 2005 - Investing in IT

€6 Billion for Health Research in Europe

The deadline for funding applications for health projects under the 7th Framework Programme for Research is 19 April 2007

The European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development – FP7 for short – officially commenced on 1 January 2007. The programme, which will run from 2007 until 2013, has been allocated a budget of €53.2 billion for the full seven years. Of this sum, more than € 6 billion will be available for research projects within the "Health" sub-programme. Applications for funding have been invited for a first round of health research projects and the deadline for receipt of applications is 19 April 2007. Hospitals now have an opportunity to bid for contracts to undertake a wide range of interesting projects within the health programme remit.

The 7th Framework Programme for Research

The framework programme is designed to respond to Europe's employment needs and competitiveness. Its ambitious goal is to maintain and extend the sectors in which Europe is the most competitive region in the world.

FP7 is divided into four thematic blocks, each of which forms a specific programme. A fifth block deals with nuclear research. The four programmes are: cooperation, ideas, people and capacities

All four programmes could be of interest to European hospitals. Health is one of the principal sub-programmes under the cooperation heading, the largest of the four areas. The budget for health amounts to € 6 billion over the seven-year period.

The "Ideas" programme focuses primarily on pioneering research, while the "People" programme covers life-long training and career development, initial training for researchers and pathways and partnerships between industry and academia, including university hospitals.

The "Capacities" programme focuses on areas such as research potential, research infrastructures, specific international cooperation activities and science in society.

The Health Programme

The deadline for receipt of funding applications for health related projects under the "Cooperation" programme is 19 April. The objective of the health research programme is to improve the health of European citizens and increase and strengthen the competitiveness and innovative capacity of European health related industries and businesses. It also covers global health issues such as emerging epidemics. About €628 million has been allocated for the first round of contracts. EU funded health research will focus on three key areas:

_ Biotechnology, generic tools and medical technologies for human health. Areas covered include highthroughput research, detection, diagnosis and monitoring, prediction of suitability, safety and efficacy of therapies, and innovative therapeutic approaches and intervention.

_ Translating research into human health. Areas covered include the integration of biological data and processes and research on the brain and related diseases.

_ Optimising the delivery of healthcare to European citizens.

The European Commission has proposed around 100 project themes for the first round of funding.

Under the biotechnology heading, the following themes are included:

_ Development of a hybrid imaging system

_ In-vivo cell guidance for image therapy

_ Novel alternative testing strategies for use in pharmaceutical discovery and development

- _ Validation, development and implementation of quantitative structures
- _ Under the translating research into human health heading, the following themes are included:
 - _ Networking bio-banking initiatives across Europe: developing standards and norms for existing and future human sample bio-banks
 - _ Memory loss: underlying mechanisms and therapy
 - _ Novel approaches to reconstitute normal immune function at old age
 - _ Increasing the participation of elderly in clinical trials
 - _ Research on human development and/or healthy ageing across the EU
- _ A range of headings in the areas of AIDS and influenza, for instance, development of innovative diagnostic test or the development of new treatment strategies for patients suffering from highly pathogenic influenza
- _ A wide range of projects in the area of cancer, including novel testing and screening methods and understanding and fighting metastasis
- _ A road map for diabetes research

Projects for other actions in health include:

- _ Identifying patients' needs in the clinical trials' context
- _ Initiatives to foster dialogue and debate on health research issues of interest to the public
- _ Health statistics

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