**PROGRAMME OVERVIEW**

The WHRI-ACADEMY international fellowship programme was designed to maximise the career development of the next generation of translational multidisciplinary researchers geared toward therapeutic innovation across rapidly developing and integrated life sciences and health care disciplines, in conjunction with 25 partner organisations across Europe, Asia, North America and Australia. The partner organisations were selected on the basis of their excellence in post-doctoral training and development, outstanding infrastructure, high scientific prominence and high intensity of innovation activities. These were:

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| Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute | The University of Melbourne | INSERM |
| University College London | National University of Singapore | University of British Columbia |
| University of Copenhagen | Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia | Monash University |
| University of Münster | St George’s University of London | University of Sussex |
| University of Michigan | Ludwig-Maximilians-University München | Karolinska Institutet |
| Aix-Marseille University | Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Oncologicas | ETH Zurich |
| KU Leuven | Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine | King’s College London |
| University of Cambridge | Nanyang Technological University | MultiMedica SpA |
| Queen Mary, University of London |  |  |

The key aspects of the programme were:

* truly worldwide collaborative opportunities for fellows in both academic and industrial environments
* partner organisations who will host the fellows both within and outside the EU thus providing mobility opportunities for fellows to and from a wide geographical area
* a transnational inter-sectorial exchange dimension between academia and industry SMEs giving academic research fellows exposure to an industry working environment without a gap in their academic careers
* an incoming mobility component to enable top-class Third Country fellows from emerging economies to be hosted in Europe to both enhance competition and to establish mutually-beneficial research cooperation
* a reintegration component to counter the brain drain of European researchers to Third Countries

The focal point of the WHRI-ACADEMY programme was the career development of the individual research fellows. The programme was characterised by transparency and openness, granting the fellow freedom to choose the research project, host organisation and host supervisor. Guided by a personal career development plan, a one-to-one mentorship programme and reintegration opportunities, WHRI-ACADEMY provided a comprehensive programme of support for the research fellow to embark on a long-term scientific career which responds to changing market needs.

WHRI-ACADEMY focused on seven research areas:

1) Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry

2) Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

3) Cellular and Developmental Biology

4) Physiology, Pathophysiology, Cardiovascular Diseases and Endocrinology

5) Neurosciences and Neural Disorders

6) Immunity and Infection

7) Diagnostic Tools, Therapies and Public Health

Researchers had to exhibit transnational mobility in accordance with Marie Skłodowska-Curie action rules. Based on mobility, three types of fellowships were available: Incoming, Outgoing and Reintegration. Applicants also had to demonstrate that there was additional funding secured to co-fund the fellowship that did not come from EU sources.

The programme had 148 fellow years to award at its disposal.

**RESULTS**

WHRI-ACADEMY ran for five years, from January 2014 to December 2018. During this period it launched six international calls for proposals. The calls were advertised widely and attracted 161 competitive applications.

A total of 369 expert evaluators were recruited internationally to assist with the selection, representing 41 countries and more than 300 institutions. An ethics committee reviewed the ethics of shortlisted proposals ensuring the highest standards of research ethics.

Following the evaluation, 67 fellowships were selected for funding. Each lasted from 12 to 36 months awarding a total of 125.96 fellow-years. The fellows represent 24 countries, of which 15 were from the EU and 9 outside the EU. The top five countries were Spain, France, UK, Germany and Italy.

For the benefit of the fellows, four WHRI-ACADEMY Training Workshops were held to provide fellows with premium scientific training as well as training on transferrable skills focused on the knowledge triangle and career enhancing skills. The training events featured high-calibre speakers from industry and academia and provided excellent networking opportunities for the fellows.

Fellows were able to maximise the benefits of their fellowship and advance their research standing by securing further funding for research, winning awards and recognition inside and outside of their host institutions and countries. All fellows reported that their careers were boosted by the WHRI-ACADEMY fellowship. Many fellows went on to take up permanent positions in academia and industry.

The WHRI-ACADEMY fellows performed outstanding research yielding exceptional research outputs, including over 100 publications in high-impact journals to date (February 2019), approximately 10% of which in Nature Research journals.

The programme performed particularly well on gender balance, as 54% of the fellowships were awarded to female researchers. This is seen as a particular achievement as the gender balance amongst supervisors was only 30% female: WHRI-ACADEMY has helped train the next generation of researchers that brings a marked improvement in gender equity and balance compared to the previous generation in life sciences research.

The fellow-year absorption rate (actual vs planned) for the programme stands at over 85%, which is believed to be above the scheme average.

**CONTACT**

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