



EDITORIAL

European Respiratory Society MD PhD programme in respiratory science

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As part of its mission, the European Respiratory Society (ERS) is dedicated to promoting education and scientific endeavour in respiratory medicine. This position statement proposes an important additional activity in this area by coordinating MD PhD degree fellowships in respiratory medicine that will be conducted in European academic centres of excellence.

This scheme is aimed at providing the very best training programmes for medical or science graduates within 5 yrs of completing their first qualification. This scheme is directed at the highest level graduates in medicine and science with the aim of educating and training them in the very best laboratories. It is predicted that the scheme is likely to attract medical graduates from Europe. However, in light of ERS outreach to all countries and in recognition of the need to attract young scientists, we suggest that after the initiation and trial period it would be open to medical and science graduates worldwide.

Laboratory and clinical research is key to achieving improved future care for patients suffering from respiratory diseases. Part of the role of ERS is to ensure that future generations of respiratory physicians and scientists receive the very best training in lung science and clinical research.

Funding for respiratory research and the training programmes is recognised to be inadequate in relation to the contribution of respiratory diseases to patient care. Furthermore, this lack of support is not significantly offset by national charities supporting respiratory research [1].

The position paper recommends that ERS considers implementing a novel funding scheme for postgraduate education of MD PhD fellows at European centres of excellence. It is proposed that this novel funding scheme is introduced at the 2010 ERS Annual Congress in Barcelona, Spain, and initially supported by specific ERS funds. While initially ERS should approve funding for this programme, it is anticipated that industry will initiate and fund a number of similar fellowships (through the ERS research foundation) in the future.

Specifically, ERS will launch a call for selected MD PhD fellowship candidates who will, upon granting of their proposals to this call, be supported by an ERS postgraduate fellowship for a period of 3–4 yrs. Candidates, together with a host supervisor from an academic centre of excellence in Europe, will submit a state-of-the-art research proposal which guarantees inclusion of the candidate in a local MD PhD programme. The suggested benefits of this proposal are as follows. 1) The scheme will generate the best possible training in respiratory research. The scientists will be part of the next generation of leaders in respiratory medicine and respiratory research. 2) This programme will aid in the formation of structured training programmes throughout Europe which will better serve future respiratory physicians and researchers. 3) The close alliance of this programme to ERS and its scientific training programmes will encourage graduates to remain actively involved in the ERS and shape the future leadership for our society.

The eligibility and nature of the awards are as follows. 1) The awards will be open to medical and non-medical graduates from around the world with recognised qualifications (*i.e.* Masters degree, Diploma or equivalent). 2) Two types of award may be considered: a 3–4 yr fellowship with matched funding from ERS and other sources (the host institution or funding agency from the country of origin); full funding from ERS for a 4-yr PhD programme.

The possible nature of the programme and the selection criteria of successful candidates are as follows. 1) The programme could be jointly run by the ERS School and the Scientific Committee. The ERS School will provide, in collaboration with the MD PhD centres, training programmes that will be attended each year (summer school). At the end of the programme, successful candidates will receive an “ERS Diploma of Respiratory Research”, as well as a PhD awarded by the host institution. However, award of the Diploma of Respiratory Research will be dependent on successful completion of the PhD. This theoretical training programme will be open to other eligible students. 2) The programme will be committed to training the very best young graduates and those entering the programme should already have evidence of research excellence and commitment to research. 3) The students will be asked to identify a host institution that has already demonstrated excellence in training programmes for PhDs and that has been accepted, with or without ERS support. 4) Only applicants from centres with established training track records leading to publications in the very best journals of medical research are likely to be successful.

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5) The research performed throughout this fellowship must be presented in preference at the ERS Lung Science Conference or the Annual ERS Congress. 6) Scientific publications reporting the results of the research performed with such a fellowship should acknowledge the support of this MD PhD fellowship programme.

STATEMENT OF INTEREST

Statements of interest can be found at www.erj.ersjournals.com/misc/statements.dtl

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the ad hoc committee for the ERS MD PhD programme in respiratory science are as follows: P. Barnes, S.E. Dahlen, M. Decramer, J-L. Eisele, L. Fabbri, M. Gaga, J. Gerritsen, G.F. Joos, L.P. Nicod, P. Palange, J.Y. Paton, K. Rabe and W. Wedzicha.

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