

# Developing a Career in Ageing Research

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Age UK Research Fellow... *June 2013*



# Research Fellowships

**EPSRC**

Engineering and Physical Sciences  
Research Council

**MRC**

Medical  
Research  
Council

**E·S·R·C**  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

**Alzheimer's  
Research UK**  
Defeating Dementia



**Diabetes UK**  
CARE. CONNECT. CAMPAIGN.



**BBSRC**  
bioscience for the future

**NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
RESEARCH COUNCIL**

**Kidney Research UK**  
Funding research to save lives

**wellcome**trust

**age**UK

# Personal Profile...

- BBSRC funded PhD → Leeds University
- Postdoc positions → UCLA, Manchester
- Research Scientist → AstraZeneca
- Senior Research Scientist → Karolinska Institute
  
- MPH → Karolinska Institute
- Research Associate/Fellow → Manchester



# Structure of Session

- **Fellowships**
- **Who funds Fellowships?**
- **The application process**
- **Assessment criteria**

- **Fellowships**



# Career Goals

- *PhD Student* → *Postdoctoral Researcher*  
→ *Lecturer / Research Fellowship*
- Need to develop an independent research direction
- You will be expected to apply for funding

# Aim of a Fellowship

- To provide support for postdoctoral researchers at each stage of their career
- *Initially* – to allow promising early career researchers to develop into successful independent researchers

⇒ **A ‘PEOPLE’ award**



# Duration

- Usually last for 2-5 years, sometimes renewable at the end
- Once on a Fellowship path you are more likely to be awarded a Fellowship at the next level up
- Potential route to a tenured position
- *Apply for as many Fellowships as possible at any one time*
- *You DON'T have to be genius*

# Types of Fellowships

- Pre-doctoral Fellowships (clinical)
- Post-doctoral Fellowships
- Career Development Fellowships
- Senior Fellowships
- *Career Re-entry Fellowships*
- *Capacity-building Fellowships*

# Positives



- Focussed on YOU
- Your salary and training
- Reduces teaching / admin / clinical work
- May cover some or all research costs
- Grow your own group
- Conferences
- Period working with other research groups

⇒ **Research collaborations / networks**

# Negatives

- Highly competitive!



# 2011/2012 Grant Round

## Research into Ageing Fund

|                         | Eols received | Full applications received | Number of grants made | % grants made to Eols | % grants made to full applications |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Fellowships</b>      | <b>70</b>     | <b>11*</b>                 | <b>3</b>              | <b>4%</b>             | <b>27%</b>                         |
| <b>PhD studentships</b> | <b>200</b>    | <b>28</b>                  | <b>8</b>              | <b>4%</b>             | <b>29%</b>                         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>270</b>    | <b>39</b>                  | <b>11</b>             | <b>4%</b>             | <b>28%</b>                         |

\* Shortlisted to 9 for interview

2 Clinical Fellowships, 1 Research Fellowship,  
8 PhD Studentships - total value of £985,122  
(excluding contributions made by the BGS to  
the Clinical Fellowships)



- **Who funds Fellowships?**



# Funding Bodies

| Government  | Charities  | Other   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Research Councils (MRC, BBSRC, ESRC)</b></li><li>• <b>National Institute for Health Research</b></li><li>• <b>Biomedical Research Centres</b></li><li>• <b>NHS</b></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Wellcome Trust</b></li><li>• <b>BHF</b></li><li>• <b>CRUK</b></li><li>• <b>Diabetes UK</b></li><li>• <b>Arthritis Research UK</b></li><li>• <b>Alzheimer's Research trust</b></li><li>• <b>Age UK</b></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Royal Society</b></li><li>• <b>Industry</b></li><li>• <b>European Union</b></li><li>• <b>International Organisations (NIH)</b></li><li>• <b>Academic / Professional Associations</b></li></ul> |

# Institutional Schemes

- Provide funding for high quality research leading to external funding
- Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences:  
**Stepping Stone Award**





# Other Sources of Information

- Circulated funding information, notice boards, funding events
- Research Support Managers, Heads of School, Research Directors
- Internet resources:
  - [www.researchprofessional.com](http://www.researchprofessional.com)
- Academic Career Stories:
  - [www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk)

# Investigate Carefully



**Check funder website for:**

- Politics and funding strategy
- Appropriateness to your field
- Competitiveness
- Success rate

# Age UK Research Remit

“Our aim is to fund research that will lead to health and wellbeing solutions for later life. To this end, our emphasis in grant funding through RiAF is on applied and translational research that will or is likely to lead to interventions within 5 years of the end of the research project.”



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- **The application process**

# Eligibility

- Varies from scheme to scheme
- Many cover different levels from postdoc to professor
- Some won't allow applications from staff who are in a permanent post – BUT you are often eligible if you are not yet tenured
- Some require 'relevant connection' to the EU, but some don't
- **DON'T get thrown out on a technicality!**

# The Application

- *Short preliminary application form*
- Full application:
  - Research project and environment
  - Training opportunities
  - CV
  - Referees
- *Interview*
- **Can take up to a year from start to finish**

# Application Essentials

- Allow sufficient time!!! - *development, approval, submission processes*
- Prepare an outline proposal and discuss with experienced researchers
- Get hold of successful proposals
- Note word limits, fonts, margins, other rules
- Write for the reviewers (lay members?)
- Avoid jargon and fully explain acronyms
- **Get your final application critiqued**



# Fellowship CV

- Publications - *quality rather than quantity*
- Steady publication record
- First and final author papers are key
- 'In preparation' papers will be followed up!
- Publications should be focussed – *niche*
- Publications should show wider impact
- Include honours, prizes and awards
- Experience of winning minor funding

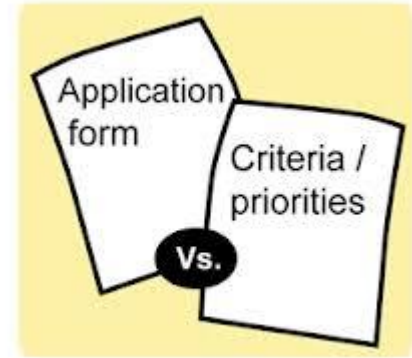
# Justify Everything

- Be very clear about everything:
  - Why you are the perfect researcher
  - Why you are in the best environment to carry out the research
  - Why this is the best environment for you to develop into an independent researcher
  - Why you need particular training, travel, costs, consumables, equipment
  - Why the Fellowship will help you develop your research career

# The Interview



- Get senior colleagues and former/current Fellows to listen to your presentation
- Schedule at least 2-3 'formal' mock interviews
- Find out who is going to sit on the selection panel on the day
- Be prepared to be pushed hard!
- *Practice, practice, practice...*



- **Assessment criteria**

# Assessment Criteria

- Three (or four) stages to the assessment:
  - (Triage)
  - External peer review
  - Shortlisting
  - Interview
- Referees and interview panel consider:
  - Standing and potential of the **person**
  - Suitability and scientific merit of the **project**
  - Excellence of the **place**

# Pathways to Impact

- *Who* is going to benefit from your research
- *How* might they benefit
- *What* will be done to ensure they have the opportunity to benefit from your research
- **You have to convince the funder with an unambiguous plan and timelines!**

# Successful Applications



- Promise excellent research
  - Are of value to potential users
  - Convince of the ability to deliver research
  - Demonstrate value for money
- 
- **Think hard how your application will cover these points?**

# Excellent Research

- Have a clearly formulated problem
- Genuine interest, understanding and enthusiasm for the work
  - Convey how the work sits within contemporary thinking and builds on existing research
  - How you will contribute to the field
  - Fitting and attainable aims/objectives
- **A clear and considered research design**



# Value to Potential Users

- Align with the funder's mission statement or strategic priorities/challenges
- Ensure your project fits with the primary aim/purpose of the chosen scheme
- Identify/consult potential users of your research outside the academic community
- Present a clear dissemination strategy and impact statement

# Your Ability to Deliver

- Demonstrate:
  - Track record (*matched to the scheme you're applying for*)
  - Relevant experience
  - How the research fits with and enhances your career development (provide specifics)

# Reasons for Rejection

- Unrealistic
- Not relevant to the funder
- Deficient or unconvincing preliminary data
- Lacking experimental detail
- Overly descriptive and no clear hypothesis
- Poorly written
- Unclear importance and/or impact
- It's been done before!



# When to Apply?

- WHEN YOU HAVE THE DRIVE TO BE INDEPENDENT
- WHEN YOU ARE INSPIRED TO FOLLOW A SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTION

THANK YOU

