

(Funding conditions)

Introduction

Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) is a severe and chronic systemic disease that primarily affects the immune and nervous systems, commonly occurring after a viral infection. The WHO has classified ME/CFS as a neurological disorder since 1969.

ME/CFS affects a similar number of people as multiple sclerosis and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of affected individuals has risen dramatically. The quality of life for those with the condition is among the lowest of all chronic illnesses, with the majority of patients unable to work, many confined to their homes or bedridden.

For decades, ME/CFS has been trapped in a vicious cycle of few published studies and a lack of research funding. As a result, there is still no biomarker or approved medications for the disease.

The German Association for ME/CFS aims to improve the situation for those affected through its research program. This program will fund small exploratory studies and pilot projects that have the potential for follow-up funding, particularly from public sources. Each year, three grants of € 25,000 will be awarded. Researchers can apply through a formal application process.

Review of the grant application

The funding line covers a wide range of possible projects. It is oriented towards the specific needs of patients and aims to improve their situation.

Type of research project: Priority will be given to pilot projects focused on drug development and research projects aimed at developing and validating biomarkers. However, studies on diagnostics, epidemiology, health care, and pathophysiology of ME/CFS are also welcome. The type of study is not an exclusion criterion. Co-funding for ongoing studies is supported.

Study design and hypothesis: It is important that the underlying hypothesis is plausible and testable, and that the potential knowledge gained from the project brings substantial benefits for researchers and those affected. Current entry criteria for ME/CFS and, if

available, meaningful endpoints should be used. Depending on the type of study, the planned sample size should be sufficient to achieve statistical significance for expected effects (statistical power).

Previous work in the field of ME/CFS or related areas (e.g., immunology, infectious diseases, virology, rheumatology, and others) is advantageous.

Inclusion of patient expertise: The German Association for ME/CFS emphasizes the importance of adding patient expertise to the planning and evaluation of the study. Examples could be consultation with patient organizations or, if possible, involving individuals affected by ME/CFS in research and the scientific publication of research results.

Financial plan: A realistic financial plan (approximately half a page) will be part of the evaluation. It should include various expense categories such as personnel costs, material costs, travel expenses, contract costs, and others. If multiple groups and/or institutions are involved, please specify the share of the funding for each group (e.g., Group X €17,000; Group Z €8,000).

Follow-up funding and publication: The potential for follow-up funding should be explored. If possible, research findings should be published in an open-access, peer-reviewed journal.

The application deadline for grants in the current calendar year is November 30.

Procedure

The application deadline is November 30 of the current year. Please send your application to forschung@dg.mecfs.de.

Anyone who is planning or already conducting a research project on ME/CFS and is affiliated with a research institution (public or private) is eligible to apply.



A funding decision will be made within approximately 8 weeks. The right to legal action is excluded.

The application form is available online in German www.mecfs.de/Foerderantrag-Forschungsprogramm or by scanning the QR code.