



Request for Proposals for a Fellowship

2023 I'M IN EMD Serono Neurodisparity Fellowship

**Advancing Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in Healthcare:
Reducing Disparities in Neurologic Care for MS Patients**

- Deadline for submitting a Proposal is midnight (EST) **February 3, 2023**
- Proposals must be submitted at www.grants.emdserono.com

Request for Proposals

Synopsis:

A unique, first-of-its-kind initiative, the **EMD Serono I'M IN Neurodisparity Fellowship Initiative** was launched last year to help identify strategies to address the barriers leading to inequality of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) care that exist in institutions and within society at large. The MS community's response was overwhelming!

Last year, Fellowship funding was awarded to:

- **Georgetown University** – their Fellow will collect data on Hispanic/Latinx patients with MS in the Washington D.C. area and implement strategies to address barriers to healthcare access for this population
- **The Division of MS and Related Disorders, Center for Neuroinflammation and Experimental Therapeutics, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania** – their Fellows will identify, define, and address institutional and societal barriers leading to neurological disparities in care

Given the success and impact of these Fellowships, EMD Serono is once again seeking proposals from eligible organizations (see below) interested in establishing fellowship programs at their institutions that are ***dedicated to reducing disparities in neurologic care for MS patients***, thereby advancing diversity, inclusion and equity in healthcare.

Note: EMD Serono is *not* seeking to establish a fellowship program itself. Nor is the Company seeking applications from residents or fellows looking for fellowship opportunities. Rather, EMD Serono is seeking to provide funding to a qualified third-party (medical society, academic medical center, etc.) who will in turn establish a neurodisparity fellowship for up to two fellows.

1. Our Commitment

At EMD Serono, we are deeply committed to increasing healthcare knowledge and advancing patient care. Our corporate vision is to transform lives by developing and delivering meaningful therapies for difficult-to-treat diseases, especially in the area of MS.

Closely aligned with that vision is our commitment to corporate responsibility, which includes addressing diversity, inclusion and inequalities in our communities, medical schools, research labs, medical practices, clinical trials, and classrooms. Our financial giving reflects this vision and commitment.

We prioritize our financial support for activities that increase healthcare knowledge and advance patient care, while also advancing diversity, inclusion and equality in the practice of medicine, the treatment of patients, and the training of healthcare providers (HCPs).

2. Purpose and Scope of this Request for Fellowship Proposals

The *EMD Serono Medical Education and Grants Office* is seeking fellowship proposals for consideration that address the following needs:

Advancing Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in Healthcare: Reducing Disparities in Neurologic Care for MS Patients

a. Background Information

Disparities in healthcare are a reflection of larger social justice issues we face in America today. Implicit bias permeates virtually every facet of our modern life and healthcare is no exception. Although HCPs take an oath to safeguard the health and well-being of all patients, implicit bias shapes their attitudes and behaviors towards patients, especially those who may be of a different race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or disability status. Implicit bias in physician decision-making significantly contributes to perpetuating health care disparities. However, implicit bias can be addressed successfully, and its impact mitigated in meaningful ways.

In 2017, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) Diversity Leadership Group (the Task Force) published groundbreaking report with recommendations to the AAN aimed at reducing disparities in neurologic care (often called neurodisparity).¹ Their report, entitled "*Reducing Neurodisparity: Recommendations of the 2017 AAN Diversity Leadership Program*," noted that advances in neurologic care have not benefitted all patients equally.

"A growing body of evidence indicates that barriers to care often fall along racial and ethnic lines, with persons of color frequently having lower rates of evaluation, diagnosis, and intervention, and consequently experiencing worse neurologic outcomes than their white counterparts."²

The Task Force noted that other classes, characteristics, and categories of patients – such as women, elders, members of LGBTQ+ communities, Native Americans, prisoners and some religious minorities – also experience neurodisparity.

The Task Force pointed out that neurodisparity "spans the entire breadth and scope of neurologic practice and clinical research" and affects the "entire timeline of care delivery for patients, from acute interventions to subsequent rehabilitation care."³ In their report, they proposed various practical steps for AAN to take "to position itself to be a leading voice in

¹ Marulanda-Londoño ET, Bell MW, Hope OA, Leacock RO, O'Carroll CB, Posas J 3rd, Stover NP, Young R, Hamilton R. Reducing neurodisparity: Recommendations of the 2017 AAN Diversity Leadership Program. *Neurology*. 2019 Feb 5;92(6):274-280. doi: 10.1212/WNL.0000000000006874. Epub 2019 Jan 18. PMID: 30659140.

² *Id.* at 275.

³ *Id.*

alleviating neurodisparity,”⁴ with the goal being “to start to put into place strategies that ensure that all patients with neurologic diseases receive the highest-quality patient-centered care,”⁵ free of racially-centered or other types of implicit bias.

Importantly, the “authors propose[d] strategies in 3 areas (provider/systemic bias, health literacy, and promotion of neurodisparity research and education) that can be implemented to achieve a solution.”⁶

The report concludes with the hope that its recommendations “spur the development of more concrete plans” and “serve as a catalyst for further concerted, sustained and far-reaching efforts to combat neurodisparity.”⁷

b. EMD Serono’s Initiatives to Enhance Diversity, Inclusion and Equality in Healthcare

In connection with our “*As One For Patients*” and “*I’M IN*” initiatives, EMD Serono has firmly committed to improving diversity and inclusion in its clinical trials and drug development process. In our mission to transform the lives of patients with difficult-to-treat diseases, we understand that our treatments need to meet the needs of a diverse patient population, which means we need to *include* a diverse patient population in our clinical trials and throughout the drug development lifecycle. We also recognize the importance of including diverse healthcare providers in those trials and encouraging the healthcare ecosystem to support those providers. We are committed to continuously challenging the status quo and strive to be at the forefront of enhancing the diversity of our clinical trial populations by including certain historically underrepresented groups. Enhancing diversity in the patient population of our clinical trials, as well as the investigators conducting our research, are important and meaningful steps towards reducing disparities in healthcare.

As another step in our commitment to reduce disparities in healthcare, EMD Serono is answering the call of AAN to elevate the emphasis on neurodisparity and develop “concrete plans” for promoting research and education in neurodisparity. To this end, EMD Serono seeks to make fellowship funding available to support institutions in their pursuit of “grooming the next generation of leaders in neurodisparity” to ensure a more equitable future for MS patients.

Reflecting on the Task Force’s recommendations and proposed strategies, EMD Serono seeks to develop neurodisparity-focused leaders by helping to create opportunities through fellowship funding to implement one or more of the proposed strategies.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.* at 276.

⁶ Moawad, Heidi, and Charles Flippen. “Reducing Disparity in Neurologic Care.” *Neurology*, vol. 92, no. 6, 2019, pp. 257–258., <https://doi.org/10.1212/wnl.0000000000006901>.

⁷ Marulanda-Londoño at 279.

c. Scope of Request for Fellowship Proposals

EMD Serono is seeking proposals from eligible organizations (see below) interested in establishing a unique, first-of-its-kind fellowship program that is ***dedicated to reducing disparities in neurologic care for MS patients***, thereby advancing diversity, inclusion and equity in healthcare.

- **Therapeutic Area:** Neurology
- **Disease State:** Multiple Sclerosis
- **Eligible Organizations:** Per EMD Serono's fellowship funding policy, only the following types of organizations may submit a fellowship Proposal in response to this RFP:
 1. **Medical societies** (e.g., AAN, ACNS, etc.)
 2. **Academic medical centers and clinical centers**
 3. **Universities**
 4. **Other Scientific Organizations**
 5. **Patient advocacy organizations** – defined as formally organized nonprofit groups that (i) concern themselves with medical conditions or potential medical conditions and (ii) have a mission and take action that seek to help people affected by those medical conditions or to help their families and caregivers⁶. **NIH** -- The U.S. National Institutes of Health and similar federal or state agencies
- **Ineligible Organizations and People:** Proposals will not be accepted from individual HCPs, fellows, residents, physician group practices, physician owned clinics, managed care organizations, or pharmacy benefit managers.
- **Nature of the Fellowship:**
 - We are open to consider creative fellowship proposals that are thoughtfully designed and ***dedicated to reducing disparities in neurologic care for MS patients*** in meaningful, concrete ways.
 - While we do not wish to be prescriptive, the fellowship program should be designed to go beyond the purely descriptive task of identifying the problem of neurodisparity (which has been described by the AAN's report discussed above). It should focus on ***potential action items and strategies***, such as those discussed in the AAN report and other resources cited therein, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs' Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion, which aims to test interventions that alleviate health disparities.
 - As a reminder, the Task Force proposed strategies in 3 specific areas:
 1. provider/systemic bias
 2. health literacy, and
 3. promotion of neurodisparity research and education

Preference will be given to proposals which seek to ***implement*** one or more of these strategies to achieve a solution to neurodisparity.

- Please include ideas about how to **maximize the impact** of the work of the fellows participating in the program. In other words, we are not looking for a fellowship program to educate or impact one or two fellows; we seek to support a program that strives to **create a ripple effect** that has a much greater impact on the institution where the fellow is being trained and, importantly, which can be replicated by other institutions and practices in the country. Publications, presentations, and enduring materials may enhance the ripple effect. “Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects.”⁸ Shoot high for far-reaching effects.
- Also, please consider how to measure the success and outcomes of the fellowship.
- **Amplifying Your Fellow’s Work**
 - We want to create a ripple effect in the MS community by having other institutions around the country learn about your Fellow’s good work and potentially replicate it at their own institutions. The first step towards that goal involves raising awareness of your Fellow and their neurodisparity work.
 - Last year, we presented the fellowship awards at an “I’M IN” event at CMSC. We also issued a press release, posted on social media, and highlighted the Fellows’ research work on a panel at our CMSC booth. Later in the year, we provided Fellows with speaking opportunities at national and international events where their research work was highlighted, and they had the opportunity to explain to national and international KOLs how to replicate their neurodisparity work at their own institutions.
 - We are planning similar amplification efforts for this year, with the goal of encouraging even more replication by institutions across the country.
 - When deciding whether to respond to this RFP, please consider if your institution is comfortable with these types of amplification efforts.
- **Budget:** Proposals should not exceed \$150,000 USD.
 - Fellowships funds may be used to pay salaries of Fellows and HCPs directly involved in the fellowship (e.g., delivering unconscious bias training with the fellow to other HCPs) for their work directly within the scope of their fellowship and other direct expenses (such as institutional overhead, etc.).
 - If the fellowship includes any clinical work involving both billable services and research or teaching, EMD Serono’s funding shall be made conditional on funding only the activities devoted to non-billable teaching or research.

⁸ Dalai Lama

Fellowships funds shall not be used to pay for salary or any portion of a position that bills for services.

- When Fellows present the outcomes from their fellowships at scientific or educational conferences, fellowship funds may be used to cover the costs of travel, lodging, and registration at the conferences or professional meetings.
- Furthermore, consistent with the PhRMA Code, fellowship funds may be used to cover the costs of travel, lodging and registration for Fellows to attend major educational, scientific, or policymaking meetings of national, regional or specialty medical associations that directly relate to their work on the fellowship.

- **Selection of Fellows - Independence**

- Fellows must be selected independently by the organization submitting a Proposal to establish a fellowship program, or if designated by the organization, the institution at which the fellows are being trained or by another independent selection organization.
- EMD Serono shall not be involved in the review of fellowship applications or the selection of fellows. EMD Serono may be involved in an awards ceremony at which the fellowships are announced.
- If NIH or another similar federal or state agency is the organization submitting a Proposal, fellows must be intramural physicians at those agencies.

- **Reconciliation of Funding**

At the end of your fellowship program (typically in the summer of 2024), you will need to provide a reconciliation of funds, that certifies fellowship funds have been used for their intended purpose and no funds remain unused. The reconciliation is completed in EMD Serono's *Request Management System*, and you will be sent a reminder when it is time to log in and complete your reconciliation.

d. How to Respond to this Request for Proposals

Requests must be submitted through EMD Serono's *Request Management System* at www.grants.emdserono.com.

Important: In the "Program Title" field on your proposal in the *Request Management System*, type in "**RFP: 2023 I'M IN EMD Serono Neurodisparity Fellowship**." This must be the title of your proposal.

e. Deadline for Submission of Proposals

The deadline for submitting a Proposal in response to this Request for Proposals is midnight (EST) on **February 3, 2023**.

f. Expected Date Decision

EMD Serono's Grant Review Committee expects to make a decision on all Proposals within approximately two weeks of the submission deadline.

If you have any questions about this Request for Proposals, please contact Leigh-Ann Durant, Head of North America Medical Governance, at leigh-ann.durant@emdserono.com or (781) 492-7398.

If you have any questions about the EMD Serono Request Management System, please contact Claudia White, our Request Coordinator, at fundingrequests@emdserono.com or (212) 589-3507.

g. Other Terms, Conditions and Disclaimers

1. The purpose of this Request for Proposals is to make eligible organizations aware that EMD Serono is interested in receiving proposals for a fellowship program. It is not an offer to contract or a commitment to provide funding.
2. A decision on all proposals will be made by EMD Serono Grant Review Committee.
3. All organizations must bear their own costs associated with responding to this Request for Proposals and submitting a Proposal.
4. EMD Serono reserves the right to amend or terminate this Request for Proposals at any time and for any reason. EMD Serono reserves the right to not approve any of the Proposals.
5. EMD Serono reserves the right to verify all information provided by an organization in its Proposal.
6. If approved, the organization shall be required to disclose that financial support was received from EMD Serono in announcements, invitations, brochures, and other written communications related to the fellowship.
7. Approval shall be conditioned on the organization's consent to public disclosure on EMD Serono's website, if required by law. The website disclosure will include the organization's name, a brief description of the activity for which funding was provided, and the amount of funding. The website disclosure will be updated quarterly.

h. EMD Serono's Compliance Commitment

EMD Serono is committed to the independence of medical education for HCPs, including fellowships. When providing financial support, EMD Serono will not do so as a reward or in exchange for prescribing or purchasing EMD Serono products or to induce the prescription or purchase of EMD Serono products in the future. Funding recipients are not expected or obliged to prescribe, purchase, or recommend an EMD Serono product.