



SPECIAL PROJECT 2017: ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES

Short version of the Call Text

Deadline: 05.00 pm, March 30th, 2018



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BACKGROUND

The Lombardy Foundation for Biomedical Research (Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica FRRB) is an entity governed by public law, a non-for-profit organization, established in October 2011 by Regione Lombardia, with the aim of promoting and supporting scientific research in Life Sciences in Lombardy (since 2011, over 100 Million euros have been committed in innovative R&D projects). The Foundation represents the main strategic platform for boosting progress, research, development and innovation within the health sector among the regional academic and industrial life science players. Its <raison d'être> is to serve as support to and for implementing the regional health care research policy, in order to place the Lombardy regional system in a leading position in Europe within this field. In addition, the Foundation aims to distribute local and European resources to innovative basic and translational research projects, which enable a positive impact on the local health care eco-system and citizens.

FRRB, in accordance with Lombardy Region, is focusing its activity on the development and implementation of Personalized Medicine approaches. "Personalised" or "Precision Medicine" is defined by the Horizon 2020 Advisory group as the *"medical model using characterization of individuals' phenotypes and genotypes (e.g. molecular profiling, medical imaging, lifestyle data) for tailoring the right therapeutic strategy for the right person at the right time, and/or to determine the predisposition to disease and/or to deliver timely and targeted prevention"*.

In accordance with Precision Medicine principles, this Call focuses on Asbestos-related diseases, which represent an emergency for Lombardy territory.

The use, import and commercialization of asbestos, its derivatives and every material, which contains asbestos, is forbidden in Italy since 1992. Lombardy Region in particular, has approved the "Piano Regionale Amianto Lombardia" in 2003, which ratifies the obligation to decontaminate all asbestos-containing materials. Nevertheless, Lombardy remains the most affected region by malignant mesothelioma, which directly links to asbestos exposure (19% of all malignant mesothelioma cases between 1993 and 2012). Moreover, asbestos related diseases have a long incubation period, which could last 20-40 years, meaning that the peak of disease onset is expected between 2020 and 2025.

In order to respond to the above mentioned territorial needs, the aim of this Call is therefore to fund one project, on one or more of the following topics:

➤ Asbestosis

This pathology is characterized by an inflammation of the pulmonary tissue, which causes fibrosis and a progressive loss of functionality of the lungs. Its severity is proportional to the amount of inhaled asbestos, thus making this pathology a typical professional one.

➤ Asbestos correlated tumours

Epidemiology studies have demonstrated a correlation between asbestos exposition and development of tumours like bronchial carcinoma, colon, ovary, kidney, mouth, stomach, pharynx, larynx, esophagus.

➤ Mesothelioma

This pathology affects the mesothelium, a thin layer of tissue, which surrounds many organs of the body, such as peritoneum, pericardium, and pleura.

The pleural mesothelioma is the most frequent one, almost totally dependent on asbestos exposition; it is a very aggressive pathology, with an average time survival of less than one year from diagnosis, without a specific guideline for the treatment of the disease.

TECHNICAL FEATURES

- The eligible organisations, which can apply to the Call, must belong to one of the following categories:
 - Private or public I.R.C.C.S. (Italian Scientific Institutes for Health Research and Health Care)
 - Public Health care providers (ASST)
 - Research Institutes
 - Universities
- The Call will select a collaborative project of three to five subjects belonging to one of the categories listed above, which must be located in Lombardy. The Coordinator of the partnership **MUST** be a private or public IRCCS or a ASST. Entities located outside Lombardy or Italy can join in the partnership, but are considered not eligible for funding
- The maximum funding allocated to the winning project will amount to 1.500.000 €. The project must be innovative, and have characteristics of transferability to the Public Health System.
- The maximum project duration is 36 months.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Administrative requirements

FRRB will firstly perform an eligibility check (from an administrative and technical point of view) on all the received proposals. Moreover, FRRB will verify the coherence to the scope of the Call of all the received projects.

Eligible costs

According to the Call text the eligible direct costs are:

- Personnel costs
- Travel costs
- Materials and supplies
- Equipment
- Subcontracting
- Other direct costs

FRRB also allows a flat rate of indirect cost calculated as 20% of all the direct costs (subcontracting excluded).

For more information on the budget costs please see the document "Guidelines for submission" published on FRRB institutional web site (www.frrb.it), Section "Bandi per il finanziamento di progetti di ricerca/Bandi aperti".

Scientific Revision

Projects, which comply with all the requirements, is sent to an international panel of experts proceed with the Scientific Evaluation.

The Scientific Evaluation will involve two distinct Boards (?):

- International experts, defined as "referees", who will perform a scientific evaluation from remote.
- A panel of five experts including a chairman, defined as "Scientific Committee", who will evaluate projects during a plenary session, called Consensus Meeting.

The Scientific Revision is divided in two phases:

Phase 1: remote revision

Each project will be assigned to three referees, chosen according to the following aspects:

- The referee is an expert of the topic described in the project.
- The referee is an expert of the technologies described in the project.
- The referee has a correspondence to the keywords indicated in the project.

Referees will evaluate the projects according to the criteria indicated in Table 1, and will provide a numeric mark to each single item described in the table and a global comment on each of the three categories described in the table (Excellence, Impact and Quality and Efficiency).

The final score will be calculated as follows:

- 1) The marks of each single category will be averaged, in order to have one mark for each category.
- 2) The three marks will be summed up.
- 3) This procedure will be applied to each referee and the final mark will correspond to the average of the scores given by the three referees.

All the projects, which will be evaluated above the sufficiency threshold, will be sent to a second step of evaluation.

Sufficiency threshold: the average of each single category (as described in point 1)) must be ≥ 3 for at least 2 of the 3 referees.

Phase 2: Consensus Meeting

The scientific committee will meet in a plenary session at the FRRB headquarter in Milan, and will evaluate projects, which have been admitted to phase 2, in order to draw up a final ranking.

At the end of the entire process FRRB will fund only one project.

The whole evaluation procedure will last a maximum of 180 days.

Table 1: categories and items of the Scientific Evaluation.

Category: EXCELLENCE	
Item 1: clarity and relevance of the objectives illustrated	0-5
Item 2: Soundness of the hypothesis and of the preliminary data, appropriateness and feasibility of the methodology, including ethical aspects.	0-5
Item 3: quality of the PI and of the research team	0-5
Category: IMPACT	
Item 1: Advancement beyond state-of-the-art	0-5
Item 2: quality of the proposal in terms of: a) Dissemination and sharing of results to the scientific community b) Dissemination of results to the lay public c) Description of RRI principles	0-5
Category: QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY	
Item 1: quality and efficiency of the workplan, of the resources allocated to work packages and of the project structure in line with the objectives.	0-5
Item 2: Appropriateness of the technical and management structures	0-5
Item 3: quality of the research consortium (PI and partners)	0-5
Item 4: appropriateness of the distribution of objectives to partners, including a feasibility analysis of each work package compared to partner expertise	0-5

PLANNED TIME SCHEDULE

Febbraio 16 th , 2018	Opening of the Call
March 30 th , 2018	Deadline for electronic submission of project proposals
April 30 th , 2018	Communication of administrative and formal eligibility checks
May-June 2018	Scientific evaluation
By July 31 th , 2018	Publication of final ranking and funding decision