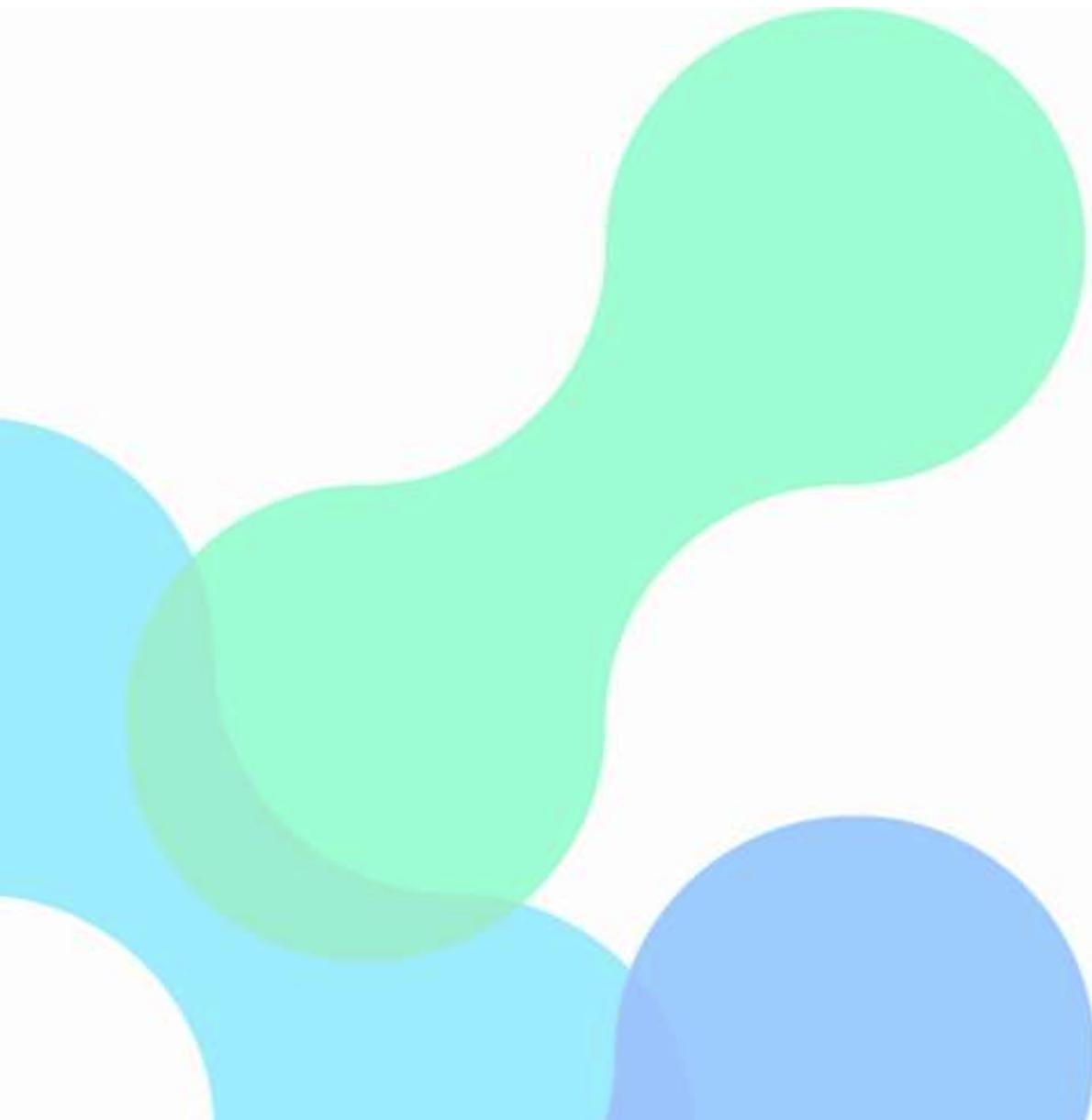


**Orthopaedic
Research UK**



Guidelines for researchers

The ORUK Research Fund 2023



Our purpose is the reason why we exist.

Our **purpose** is to use our funding to drive breakthrough research and education programmes and innovation in bone, joint and muscle well-being.

Our aim is to reduce the burden on individuals, on workplaces, and on our health system.

We are investing in our future movement

As one of the very few registered charities devoted to addressing the most important gaps in research funding in bone, joint and muscle wellbeing, we must always keep investing in our future movement.

The need we serve is ever-worsening: 19m people suffer from musculoskeletal (MSK) problems in the UK, resulting in ever-lengthening NHS waiting lists, and the loss of 30m working days to the UK economy ¹.

We want to use our funding to drive breakthrough research to reduce the burden on individuals, on workplaces, and our health system. We aim to support research capable of being translated into benefits for people. This is achieved by investing in academic and non-academic research within the following two areas:

- 1) Diagnosis
- 2) Treatment

Research with patients at its heart

Your research should be aimed at enhancing the quality of life for those affected by debilitating bone, joint and muscle conditions. The goal is to identify challenging areas in diagnosis and treatment, understand the underlying mechanisms involved, and develop appropriate scientific, clinical or technological solutions to address them.

Why are we focusing on diagnosis?

MSK conditions can cause pain, disability, fatigue and often anxiety, depression or social isolation ¹. To achieve an effective treatment outcome, correct and early diagnosis is essential to a patient's survival and quality of life.

With an ever-increasing ageing society and a more active population, the risk of having a MSK condition increases significantly. This risk rises further when considering other modifiable risk factors, such as obesity and physical inactivity.

Sometimes patients' compliance to seek medical support is a significant barrier to effective treatment ². People rarely associate symptoms such as joint pain, stiffness or swelling with a condition requiring prompt medical attention. Unfortunately, late diagnosis of MSK conditions is a major barrier in prevention of worsening of conditions.

Why are we focusing on treatment?

There are over 200 known MSK conditions that affect 1 in 4 in the UK adult population, which accounts for 30% of GP visits. The NHS in England spends around £5 billion each year on treating musculoskeletal conditions. It constitutes the third largest NHS programme budget ³.

Treatment involves the initiation of interventions when other alternative options such as prevention and early intervention have failed to work, or that the condition has been diagnosed at a later stage and is irreversible. This line of action often adds other extra measures to prevent patients experiencing further complications.

Although not all individuals treated for MSK conditions experience chronic pain, but its burden both on the health and care systems is significant.

ORUK research grants

We will be offering the following research grants in 2023:

The ORUK Early-career Research Fellowship

Designed to support the brightest and best academic talents interested in advancing MSK research in the UK.

- Help establish researchers' academic independence and international reputation
- Develop ambassadors for ORUK and support them to become future MSK leaders
- Funding of up to £110K over 2 years

Who can apply?

Early-career clinical and scientific academics who are within eight years of their PhD award or equivalent professional training, or within six years of their first academic appointment, are invited to apply.

How many startups are we going to fund?

Up to five (dependent on the quality and requested budget)

The ORUK Inspiration Fund

Designed to support innovative and patient engaging projects, addressing patients' unmet needs. Projects should aim to reduce MSK pain, improve function, decrease healthcare costs, and improve quality of life.

- Must involve patients (or data linked to patients) with bone, joint or muscle conditions
- Must be an evidence-based research project
- Must take place in the UK
- Funding of up to £50K over 1 year

Who can apply?

Orthopaedic surgeons, scientists and other MSK AHPs.

How many startups are we going to fund?

Up to five (dependent on the quality and requested budget)

The Ronald Furlong Fund (for startups)

Designed to support entrepreneurs accelerate innovative and commercially viable ideas to solve the unmet needs of society around bone, joint and muscle wellbeing.

- Must be backed by evidence-based research or developing it
- Must be a UK-based startup and registered with Companies House
- Must have business and financial plans
- Investment of up to £100K
- ORUK will ask for equity in the company and the amount will be negotiated at the final stage depending on various business factors, e.g., size, stage of development, nature of the activity, etc.

Who can apply?

Startups with passionate and driven individuals with game-changing ideas are invited to apply.

How many startups are we going to fund?

One (dependent on the quality and requested budget)

Key dates*

5 May 2023	Expressions of Interest (Eoi) submissions open
5 June 2023 (17:00)	Expressions of Interest (Eoi) submissions close
5-15 June 2023	Research Committee review
15 June 2023	Expressions of Interest results announced
17 July 2023 (09:00)	Full application submission close
17 July – 13 October 2023	External peer review
November/December 2023	Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) review
December 2023	Final decisions by the Board of Trustees

* Dates are subject to change

IMPORTANT

1. All applicants must share our [Standard Research Agreement](#) with their respective employer's Contracts Department and Technology Transfer Office to approve and agree to our terms and conditions before submitting their full application form. We reserve the right to reject applications that do not adhere to this process.
2. We sign our [Standard Research Agreement](#) with Universities, NHS Trusts and registered business entities in the UK, not with individuals.
3. Please take your time to read useful [information for researchers](#) on our website and if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to [get in touch](#).
4. Applicants are only allowed to submit one application for this research call.

References

- 1 Versus Arthritis, The state of musculoskeletal health 2019: arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions in numbers ([link](#))
- 2 Leslie R Martin *et al.*, The challenge of patient adherence, The Clinical Risk Management, 2005 ([link](#))
- 3 NHS England, Living well, ageing well and tackling premature mortality: Musculoskeletal conditions ([link](#))

Submitting your research application

Stage 1: Research Committee Review – Expression of Interest

The short expression of interest (Eoi) form is designed to make the selection process at the early stage easier. The online form will allow researchers to convey the societal need for their research as clearly as possible using 350 words.

No specific feedback will be generated at the end of this stage to either successful or rejected proposals other than confirming the decision of the Research Committee.

Please note that there will not be an appeal process in place to reverse the decision of the Research Committee. The completed [Eoi form](#) must be submitted online.

Stage 2: External Peer Review – Full Application

The full application form will be emailed to the successful applicants after 15 June 2023.

The submitted full application form must be BLINDED. Applicants MUST ensure that there is no mention of any names of individuals, institutions/places or work/partner organisation or any other descriptions that could reveal the identity of the applicants to the external reviewers.

Additionally, all applicants are required to use scientific language and include images where appropriate, in addition to providing the necessary references to support their claims. If these references are based on their previous work, they would also need to be blinded.

The applicants are encouraged to suggest up to five names of experts within their research field to review their proposal. These external experts must not be linked to their application and ORUK will not guarantee that these individuals will be invited to review.

Multiple external experts will be invited to review the full applications. External reviewers will be asked to use a scoring system to rate the scientific quality of research. At the end of this stage, applications will be ranked according to the scores received by the external reviewers. Those qualified or rejected at this stage will be notified via e-mail.

Applicants of the rejected proposals will receive their score along with any specific feedback that may have been provided by the external reviewers.

Those qualified at this stage will then be forwarded on to the Scientific Advisory Committee for further evaluation.

Accompanying their full application, the applicants are required to enclose CV for all the stakeholders involved. The format of the files can be in both PDF (.pdf) or Word (.docx). For CVs, all files should be titled as following: "**Name of researcher_CV.pdf**".

Note: The applicants who have applied for the Ronald Furlong fund for startups will be reviewed by the Finance, Investment and Audit Committee of ORUK at this stage, and are required to submit their full business and financial plans at this stage.

Stage 3: Scientific Advisory Committee Review

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) normally meets up once a year to review and recommend the best MSK research that can make a positive impact on patients' lives.

Applicants are required to appear before this committee, give a short presentation and take part in a Q&A session.

The same scoring system used by the external reviewers is applied to assess each application. Recommendations of the SAC will then be forwarded to the Board of Trustees.

Note: This stage does not apply to those who have applied for the Ronald Furlong fund.

Stage 4: ORUK Board of Trustees

The Board receives the recommendations of the SAC/Finance and Investment Committee, and depending on the budget and additional information received, awards research grants.

Investing in our future movement

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