



Male Contraceptive Initiative
811 Ninth Street, Suite 120 #255
Durham, NC 27705

Male Contraceptive Initiative 2024 Fellowship Program

Fellowship Applications due	May 31st, 2024
Decision and award notification	June-July, 2024
Earliest possible start date	August, 2024

Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose: The Male Contraceptive Initiative Fellowship Program offers support for up to two years for predoctoral and postdoctoral trainees focusing on projects related to the research and development of novel contraceptives delivered to men.

Background: Nearly half of all pregnancies worldwide are unintended. Furthermore, male contraceptives are limited to condoms and vasectomy, which do not provide adequate variety in characteristics to meet the needs of all users.

Male Contraceptive Initiative (MCI), a US-based 501(c)3 nonprofit, is a funding agency and advocates for safe, effective, and reversible contraceptive solutions for sperm-producing individuals.

The emphasis of this funding opportunity is to provide early stage career support to researchers in fields related to the development of contraceptives for those who produce sperm, and encourage foundational research in the underlying science of male fertility and infertility.

Award Details

	Predoctoral Fellowships	Postdoctoral Fellowships
Scope	All projects being undertaken by a trainee investigator relevant to the development of male contraceptives. This includes, but is not limited to, the research and development of male contraceptives, basic science of male contraceptive targets, and tools that are broadly applicable to the development of male contraceptives.	
Maximum Award Budget	Up to \$80,000 in total support over two years at up to \$40,000 per year.	Up to \$120,000 in total support over two years at up to \$60,000 per year.
Indirect Costs / Overhead	Funds are for coverage of tuition (if required), salary, and fringe benefits such as healthcare. Other expenses including overhead / costs are not allowed.	
Award Project Period	Awards may have a maximum Project Period of two years.	
Available Funds	MCI may commit up to \$300,000 to fund multiple awards in association with this announcement.	

MCI Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships provide support for up to two years, with a second year renewal contingent on submission and approval of a first year progress report as well as availability of funds. Fellowships or fellowship funds are not transferable to other persons or items. Current fellows are eligible to apply for continued funding of up to two years through this mechanism.

Other benefits associated with MCI Fellowships include access to MCI resources and networks, promotional outlets such as webinars and meetings, connection to experts and key opinion leaders, and other support from MCI staff.

To adjust for differences in global living cost, stipends may be subject to country-related discounts and will be informed by standard rates for government pre- and postdoctoral fellowships in the location where the applicant will perform the work. Applicants from countries where maximum or minimum stipend amounts are limited by policy or where legal or tax regulations are applicable are advised to contact the appropriate MCI officer at the earliest available opportunity.

Eligibility

Applicants must be either pursuing a PhD or employed as a postdoctoral trainee with a research focus applicable to contraception. Interested parties with other designations are encouraged to contact the appropriate MCI officer at the earliest available opportunity to discuss eligibility.

Applicants must be sponsored by a principal investigator who is affiliated full-time with an accredited academic institution, has ongoing research activity involving male contraception, and agrees to supervise the applicant's training.

Applicants need not be citizens or residents of the United States. Institutions need not be in the United States. Eligible institutions include accredited domestic and foreign non-profit institutions, public and private universities, colleges, foundations, and hospitals.

Fields of study

This application is open to all projects relevant to the development of male contraceptives. This includes, but is not limited to, the research and development of male contraceptives, basic science of male contraceptive targets, and tools that are broadly applicable to the development of male contraceptives.

Acceptable fields of study include, but are not limited to, molecular and cell biology, andrology, reproductive biology, pharmacology and toxicology, medicinal chemistry, structural biology, developmental biology, endocrinology, and public health. Potential applicants are encouraged to contact MCI for questions regarding eligibility. Applicants seeking further discussion regarding this section are encouraged to consult the appropriate MCI official.

Applicants to all MCI funding opportunities are encouraged to submit projects aligned with **MCI Priority Research Areas**, which include the following approaches:

- Targeting sperm at post-meiotic phases of development or later
- Targeting sperm functions required for normal fertilization, such as sperm motility and the acrosome reaction
- Targeting post-testicular processes required for fertility, including epididymal maturation and sperm transport in the excurrent ducts
- Targets that lead to on-demand or otherwise fast-acting reversible male contraceptives
- Those that repurpose existing chemical entities for contraception which may be currently approved by the FDA or other regulatory agencies for other indications.
- Those with the potential to result in Multipurpose Prevention Technology (MPT) products that prevent pregnancy and act against sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.

Applications not within MCI Priority Research Areas but fulfilling other eligibility criteria are reviewed alongside applications aligned with MCI Priority Research Areas using the same criteria and evaluative process.

Applications in the following areas are considered not responsive and will not be reviewed:

- Approaches developing contraceptives that are delivered to female users only

- Approaches that permanently inhibit fertility, e.g. cause sterility or other defects in reproduction after cessation of treatment
- Male or female barrier development, e.g. condoms
- Approaches involving the administration of steroid hormones to manipulate the hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal axis (HPG axis)
- Approaches that induce active immunity
- Applications focused on molecular targets for which there is no human ortholog

Section II: How to Apply

To start an application, go to the ProposalCentral website at (<https://proposalcentral.com/>). If you are a new user of ProposalCentral, follow the link “Need an Account?” and complete the registration process. If you are already a registered user, login with your username and password. If you have forgotten your password, click the “Forgot your Password?” link.

Once you are logged in, please click the “Professional Profile” tab at the top and complete steps 1-11 or update with your current information. Your name, degrees, position/title, academic rank, department, and address will be pulled from this page in ProposalCentral.

Next, select the “Grant Opportunities” tab and a list of applications will be displayed. Find “Male Contraceptive Initiative” and click “Apply Now” on the appropriate opportunity.

Application documents

The following components must be included in the application and uploaded as attachments.

A. Project Narrative - (6 pages maximum, including figures and references)

The plan for the project should concisely describe the present state of knowledge as it relates to the proposed project, as well as the importance, scope, specific aims, and objectives of the proposed work to be performed. Include figures when necessary. Please include the applicant and sponsoring principal investigator(s) name, title, institution, and contact information.

Successful applications will include a specific hypothesis and subsequent objectives, as well as sufficient details on the approach, methods, and techniques the applicant will use to achieve objectives.

Expected outcomes should be listed in detail, and measured by specific quarterly benchmarks. Benchmarks should be specific and clear in how progress will be demonstrated. Timelines are to be presented in a written format that details specific activities performed during each quarterly period, as well as displayed visually in a format similar to the below example.

	2024		2025				2026		
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Specific Aim 1									
Milestone 1.1									
Milestone 1.2									
Specific Aim 2									
Milestone 2.1									
Sub-objective 2.1									
Milestone 2.3									
Specific Aim 3									
Milestone 3.1									
Milestone 3.2									
Milestone 3.3									

Example Gantt Chart. Chart may be adapted in any way to fit the submitting project. Milestones may be further divided into sub-objectives and other categories as needed such that they provide detailed activities that can be related directly to the milestones to be achieved.

B. Personal Statement - (1 page maximum)

The Personal Statement should concisely outline the applicants motivation, career plans, and specific interest in male contraception.

C. Applicant CV - (4 pages maximum)

List education, current and prior positions, and appointments. NIH biosketch format preferred.

D. Suggested Reviewers - (1/2 page maximum)

Please list five Principal Investigators who are experts in a field of study relevant to the proposed work, who are not current or recent (past 3 years) collaborators of the applicant or sponsoring PI, and who do not have direct personal or professional interest in the applicant's training or career. Include email addresses. Representatives of any

institutional unit that stands to receive financial benefit from a fellowship are not considered independent reviewers. Reviewers from outside the applicant's institution are preferred. Opposed reviewers may also be listed in this section.

E. Institutional Representation (Optional)

This section provides information concerning the institution's eligibility to receive grants under U.S. tax laws and approvals of the project by reviewing bodies. Please consult with your institutional Sponsored Projects Office or equivalent for further information as to what may be included in this section.

F. Letters of Support

MCI requires two letters of support: One sponsor/mentor letter and one letter of reference from an expert in the field of study. Letters of Reference must be submitted before you can submit your application. You are required to submit contact information for the two references listed below. Once you add their name in the system, an auto-generated email will be sent to them with instructions on what they should address in their letter of support and a personalized hyperlink where they should upload their letter.

- i. Sponsor/mentor letter of support: This letter must outline, in lay terms, the relevance of the project to the MCI Fellowship Program; the training and experiences during the project that will assist the fellow to apply successfully for continued funding and to progress towards independence; and the ability of the fellow to carry out the proposed project with the resources available to them from the sponsor/mentor. NOTE: If there will be more than one sponsor/mentor, the sponsors may collaborate to produce a single letter, signed by both sponsors, which includes details of how coordination of supervision will be carried out.
- ii. Letter of reference: The applicant must solicit one letter of reference from someone other than the project sponsor/mentor who is an expert in the field of study and who is not a current or recent (past 3 years) collaborator of the applicant or sponsoring PI. Examples include published authors in the field of study or experts whose work is cited as foundational in the submitted proposal. Letter writers should be provided with a copy of the final version of the application sufficiently in advance of the application deadline. Applicants are encouraged to speak with their advisor(s) to identify potential letter writers. Representatives of any institutional unit that stands to receive financial benefit from a fellowship are not considered appropriate references. Representatives from outside the applicant's institution are preferred.

These are to be submitted directly by the letter writer by the application deadline.

Section III: Review and notification

Fellowships will be awarded on the basis of the applicant's previous experience, academic record, and the caliber of the proposed research. Additional evaluative criteria include the quality of the mentor, the training program, and environment, as well as the relevance of the proposal to the future development and/or introduction of a male contraceptive. Proposals will be evaluated by the MCI Research Committee and at least one external reviewer. Final decisions are made by the MCI Board of Directors.

The applicant's professional ability and promise for a research career in male contraceptive research will be highly prioritized in the evaluation of proposals, and will be assessed on the basis of the letters of recommendation, career plans, prior clinical and research training, academic transcripts, and the mentor's endorsement.

Section IV: Award Administration

Fellows are responsible for submitting a yearly Progress Report 30 days before the one-year mark of the project start date. Progress Reports are to be submitted through <https://proposalcentral.com/>. The annual Progress Report is to be in PDF format, using 11 point Arial font and with at least 0.5 inch margins. The Progress Report will be a confidential document. It is to include:

Accomplishments (four pages maximum):

- What were the major goals and objectives of the project for the current year and what was accomplished toward these goals?
- What were the benchmarks for the current year, were they met, and what is the evidence of successful research progress?
- Were there problems or delays or changes to original goals and objectives that require modification of research plans?

Progress Reports will be evaluated by the MCI Research Committee and used to determine continuation of funding. Awardees may be contacted for clarifications if questions arise during review. Continuation of funding beyond one year is contingent upon satisfactory progress and availability of funds.

A final Progress Report will be due no later than 30 days after the end of the award. It is to be in PDF format, using 11 point Arial or Times Roman font and with at least 0.5 inch margins. The final Progress Report will be a confidential document. It is to include:

Accomplishments (six pages maximum):

- What were the major goals and objectives of the project for the final year and what was accomplished toward these goals?
- What were the benchmarks for the current year, were they met, and what is the evidence of successful research progress?
- What were the overall goals of the project and what was accomplished?
- What are future directions for the research, and are there plans or avenues to carry it out?
- What did this fellowship mean for your career advancement, and what are your current long-term plans?

Fellows may also be asked to perform structured or unstructured updates via phone, digital video service, or email. Sufficient notice will be provided by MCI for these updates.

Fellows may be asked to participate in promotional efforts by MCI, which may include interviews, outreach, and other publicity. These efforts will be voluntary, and will not impact the terms of the fellowship.

Section V: Notices

The fellowship grant is restricted to the period indicated in the Grant Letter provided during the award process. Extension/reduction of the granted period may be considered with written request. The invitation is limited to the successful applicant specified in the Grant Letter.

The application is not to be considered confidential. Applicants wishing to disclose confidential information may contact the appropriate MCI administrator for details.

MCI values representation and diversity in the scientific community. Applications from women, people of color, the LGBTQIA community, and other historically marginalized groups are highly encouraged.

Institutional Sponsored Projects Offices or other representatives must agree to the stipulations in the Terms of Agreement. The Terms of Agreement are available upon request and will be distributed simultaneously with award notification.

MCI is required to publish a list of grantees on their website. Fellows and a short biography may be included in this information.

Section VI: Contact

Questions regarding any aspect of the award or award process are encouraged. Please contact:

Logan Nickels

Chief Research Officer

logan@malecontraceptive.org

Or:

grants@malecontraceptive.org

For technical issues while applying, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.