

Guidelines for general business policy

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General Information

In its strategy 2020–2025 ChiroSuisse has declared the advancement of scientific evidence related to chiropractic practice as one of eight strategic goals. Consequently, the “Swiss Foundation for Chiropractic Research” (SFCR) was founded in 2023. The actions and decisions taken in this foundation shall therefore always be in line with the official politics of ChiroSuisse.

Vision

Switzerland will play a leading role in the scientific advancement of research relevant to the chiropractic profession and patients with musculoskeletal conditions.

Mission

Our foundation will make a significant contribution to improve the scientific knowledge, quality and application of care in the field of musculoskeletal conditions. It will do so by supporting, facilitating and advocating the translation and implementation of research and by empowering committed researchers to handle their daily challenges. All research funded by the Swiss Foundation for Chiropractic Research shall have a clear emphasis on musculoskeletal conditions and shall create added value for patients, third party payers, policy makers and chiropractic professionals.

Governance and appointment of Academic Advisory Board (AAB)

The SFCR is governed by the Board of the Foundation (BoF) which is elected by the Executive Board of ChiroSuisse. The BoF is advised by the Academic Advisory Board (AAB). The AAB shall be appointed by the BoF and comprise 3–4 representatives, ideally consisting of the following:

- one researcher with documented expertise in musculoskeletal research
- one researcher with clinical experience in chiropractic
- one chiropractor with a PhD degree
- one researcher with a PhD and an interest in topics related to musculoskeletal disorders

The AAB will be evaluated every year by the BoF. The AAB shall advise the BoF on research strategy and applications. Members of the AAB will normally be precluded

from benefitting from SFCR funding for their academic activities and in the exceptional cases where this is not the case shall not be party to the relevant discussions of the AAB.

Goals and Strategic Measures

The BoF works out a document stipulating the goals and strategic measures for the activity of the SFCR for each 5-year period starting with 2024-2028. The document must include goals and strategic measures for the collection of funds.

Long term strategic priorities

The efforts of the SFCR are specifically focused on addressing issues related to the on-going support of researchers and the promotion of high-quality research projects which will:

- 1) Increase the research capacity of the chiropractic profession through the advancement of PhD and post-doctorate studies
- 2) Consolidate and support the existing research capacity within the chiropractic profession
- 3) Improve the knowledgebase to result in evidence-based decisions in chiropractic practice
- 4) Foster the translation and implementation of research relevant to chiropractic to clinical practice, third party payers and policy makers.

Relevant research subjects and funding criteria

1. Research focus of the SFCR

The areas of interest that this policy addresses are those that are related to the practice of chiropractic. These include but are not limited to basic, clinical and population-based research. Priority will be given to clinical research.

1.1. Clinical and Population-based Sciences Research

Research in this field is primarily aimed at evaluation of the role of chiropractic in health care. It includes:

- the evaluation of the validity of diagnostic procedures used in chiropractic practice
- the evaluation of the outcomes of manual therapy
- epidemiological and sociological studies
- role of chiropractic in preventive care

- economic evaluations/cost-effectiveness
- the evaluation and improvement of quality standards in chiropractic clinical practice

1.2. Basic Sciences Research

Research in this field deals primarily with biomechanics and neurophysiology. It includes the study of:

- spinal and articular biomechanics and their control
- the relationship between the spine and bodily functions
- the neurological control of bodily function
- the effects of manual therapy
- Further areas of basic research (e.g., genetics, biochemistry or others) with relevance for the chiropractic profession

1.3. Chiropractic-related research

Research in fields, which do not belong to chiropractic itself, will also be considered if it appears that they can foster the knowledge, the understanding, and the practice of chiropractic.

2. Priorities

The SFCR is partially funded by the Swiss chiropractic profession; therefore, Swiss projects designed to result in a PhD or projects designed to enhance the effectiveness, the quality standards and the recognition of chiropractic in Switzerland will receive first priority. Multidisciplinary projects involving chiropractors will be welcome. Proposals submitted by other qualified professionals will also be considered provided they are consistent with the declared goals of the SFCR. The SFCR encourages international and interdisciplinary cooperation.

2.1 Assessment Criteria

In judging the applications, the Academic Advisory Board (AAB) will consider the following points that should be addressed by the applicant:

a) Originality

- What is new in the project?
- Will the project provide new insights in the subject area?
- Will the project be valuable in testing the results of existing studies?

b) Importance of the work

- Is the subject area already receiving much attention, i.e., is further support warranted?
- Will the project significantly contribute to furthering knowledge in this field?
- How will the project ultimately benefit patients?

c) Scientific reliability

- Is the project well designed?
- Are the methods outlined appropriate to achieve the objective?
- Is the sample size appropriate, i.e., not too small to answer the question nor too large to avoid wasting valuable resources?
- Is the use of controls appropriate?
- Are supporting references up to date and relevant?

d) Experience of applicant, facilities, and support

- Is the applicant sufficiently experienced and qualified to carry out the study?
- Is the applicant's department, work-setting, or level of supervision of a high enough caliber to support the project adequately?
- Is the support claimed from universities/research bodies validated?

e) Appropriate use of funds

- Is the funding requested appropriate for the activities detailed?
- Has the applicant sourced funding from other sources, or considered co-funding? Is completion of the project dependent on the applicant securing funds from other sources?

3. Application requirements

Funding requests will normally only be considered from qualified personnel and/or institutions wishing to undertake research in a definite area of interest to the profession. The lead applicant has to be an individual administered by a Swiss educational/research institution and a major academic contributor to the research project. At least one chiropractor must be a member of the research team. Proposals which do not include a chiropractor on the team will be considered only if the proposed research is of particularly high quality and importance to the chiropractic field and meets the criteria described above.

The fund will consider salary, travel and conference costs as well as administration and publication costs. The SFCR looks favorably on those projects which seek co-funding

and encourages applicants to include this in their budget. Financial accountability must be submitted at the end of the project.

Grants are not available for the funding of undergraduate education.

4. Handling of Applications and Review Process for Research Proposals

4.1. Basic outline and required features

Applicants must use the application form available on the website of the SFCR. Details of the lead applicant and collaborators, curriculum vitae from all applicants, and full research proposal (max. 5 pages, Times New Roman, font size 11) as well as a detailed budget must be included. The budget must be submitted as an appendix. Appendices may also include but should not be limited to forms and outcomes instruments to be used.

4.1.1. Summary:

To include full title of the project and a structured abstract (max. 250 words) with:

- Background
- Principal research question
- Study design and methodology, including a brief description of the expected data analysis

4.1.2. Project Outline including details of the proposed investigation:

- Title
- Background
- Research objectives/principal aim
- Concise description of the study design and methodology, including a power calculation if deemed appropriate for the study design, expected data analysis, as well as knowledge transfer of the results
- Value of the research to patients
- Project milestones (use bar graph/grant chart, but restrict it to the execution of the project)

Not limited to the page restriction: Detailed budget, including salaries, resources, detailed account statement, disclosure from the applicant institution, and declarations and appendices, including approval from the responsible ethics committee, if needed.

4.2. Evaluation and approval of a project

4.2.1. General considerations

All proposals must be submitted electronically to the BoF of the SFCR, according to the instructions provided on the SFCR website. All proposals meeting the aforementioned requirements will be reviewed by the AAB. If the proposal meets minimum standards and fulfills the criteria as outlined above, the proposal will be evaluated internally. Should the application extend beyond the scope of the AAB's expertise (which will be determined by consensus) then the application will be sent to external independent content experts appointed by the AAB. These reviewers will be chosen based upon their expertise and should not be involved in the project nor have financial interests relating to the proposed project. The criteria that will be used by the committee and external experts are outlined above. The AAB will evaluate the proposals and give their recommendations to the BoF who will make the final decision. The BoF will notify the lead applicant as to its decision.

Funding will generally be given under the condition, that the project/study is started within 6 months following the funding decision.

4.2.2. Procedures and payment calendar

Applications can be submitted twice a year. Submission deadlines will be published online. Applications will be processed at the next possible BoF meeting.

The decision will be communicated to the applicant by the BoF in a notification letter. The notification letter binds the SFCR to provide funding and the applicant to the completion of the project, providing progress reports and final report. An additional contractual agreement may be concluded. The fund will be administered by the office of the SFCR and payment will be made according to the agreed payment plan between the applicant and the BoF. Instalments may be withheld depending upon progress of the study. In addition, the SFCR may withhold the last instalment depending upon the stipulation of the notification letter.

4.3. Reporting Requirement and Payment Calendar

4.3.1. Progress reports

Progress reports are to be submitted to the BoF at least once a year, with the first report at the latest one year after approval of the project. Any delay in the research project must be immediately reported to the BoF.

Applicants must use the progress report form on the website of the SFCR. The BoF may request a progress report twice a year at its discretion.

The reports must contain the following information:

- Progress report against research plan
- The finances and schedule of the project as compared with those described in the research plan.
- Unexpected difficulties including solutions to overcome them.
- Work to be performed in the subsequent 12 months if not identical with the plan in the research proposal.

4.3.2. Evaluation of reports

The evaluation of reports will be performed by the AAB who will report to the BoF. If appropriate, the SFCR reserves the right to postpone payments as outlined in the notification letter. The BoF reserves the right to terminate payment to a project when the project does not progress according to the approved protocol as determined by the progress reports and/or other communication with the applicant.

4.4. Publication

Applicants must submit at least one original article in a peer-reviewed journal listed in the major indexing systems. Any publication should appropriately acknowledge the SFCR as a funding body.