



HTRS 2021 Mentored Research Awards: FAQs

Q&A with Program Chair **Veronica H. Flood, MD**, Versiti Blood Research Institute/Medical College of Wisconsin; and Vice Chair **Neil A. Zakai, MD**, University of Vermont:

1. How many years of research experience do award recipients tend to have?

A: This varies, but since the MRA encourages early-career physician-scientists, we can project that applicants are all looking to build additional research experience.

2. Do most HTRS recipients eventually go on to achieve NIH funding in the area of hemostasis/thrombosis?

A: With 32 completed MRA projects since the program began in 2007, 12 of those (38%) received K Awards (career development awards) from the NIH, and 10 of those (31%) received R or DP5 awards (independent research awards) from the NIH.

3. Does it matter if my project is hemostasis or thrombosis? Clinical, translational, or basic science research? Or whether I'm a junior faculty member or a fellow?

A: It really doesn't. What matters is the project itself, how it dovetails with an investigators' previous research, and the quality of the mentors and their research, as well. Does your project help advance knowledge in the area of benign hematology, even in a small way? That is key.

4. Does it matter if I don't have previous preliminary data for my project?

A: A little preliminary data is great, but not necessary. That's the purpose of this MRA – to provide an opportunity for protected research time. It would be helpful if the mentor had preliminary data associated with your project, but again, it is not necessary.

5. Can my aims be linked?

A: In terms of grantsmanship, construct your aims in such a way that the answers don't collapse the other aims. They should be interrelated but not linked or dependent on one another, or the entire project has the potential to falter. If you validate your hypothesis, great, but it's also good if you disprove your hypothesis and it leads you in an unexpected direction toward a different positive outcome. Think about how your answers will get you to the next stage in the research.

Your project should be hypothesis-driven. What is your goal? What is the question you're trying to answer? Be sure you're clear. Consider having someone else in the scientific community, but not in your specialty, read your proposal. It should advance the field in some incremental way.

6. Are there repeat applicants, those who applied but didn't receive an award the first time?

A: We can unequivocally say that many of the past 50 award recipients are repeat applicants. (I am tracking down this statistic). If the HTRS reviewers found a fatal flaw in the first submission, clearly the applicant would need to submit a new project. Those who applied and progressed in 2020 to the full proposal stage are encouraged to submit a rebuttal in their pre-proposal application (in the online grant application platform) explaining why their project should be advanced directly to 2021 full proposal status. This is new for this year.

7. How many people on average apply per MRA grant cycle?

A: In 2020, a total of 33 investigators applied and 14 advanced to the full proposal stage, with 4 awards granted. In 2019, a total of 40 applied and 14 advanced to the full proposal stage, with 4 awards granted. In 2018, 36 applied and 15 advanced, with 5 awards granted. In 2017, 43 applied, 18 advanced, and 6 awards were granted (1 recipient relinquished the award).

8. What if I don't have an established mentor at my institution?

A: HTRS can now help potential applicants looking for a research mentor with experienced HTRS investigators from the U.S. and Canada. We are seeking to assist applicants from Idea States in particular, areas of the U.S. defined as underserved by NIH with regard to resources for scientific research. For further info or assistance, please email jziegler@versiti.org.

9. How important is a career development plan?

A: A clear career development plan can be as important as a great research plan. It should demonstrate sincere commitment to an academic career in benign hematology and/or an academic career with a major component of, or overlap with, benign hematology. It should address future career goals/plans and highlight the relevance of the proposed research to the applicant's state career goals.

Applicants who are not in training for hematology or who are not working primarily as hematologists, but whose careers are in other disciplines that have a substantial component of, or overlap with the disciplines of hemostasis and/or thrombosis (e.g. obstetricians/gynecologists), must include:

- the relevance of the proposed research to their career
- how the disciplines of hemostasis and/or thrombosis overlap with, and have substantial relevance to their career; and
- how they will incorporate hemostasis/thrombosis into their careers long-term by performing research and clinical care with that focus

10. Further questions?

A: Please feel free to email Jennifer Ziegler, Director, Awards Programs & Marketing, HTRS, at jziegler@versiti.org. We look forward to hearing from you!