

Regulations for the «Health Services Research» funding programme

Preamble

Over the last hundred years, intensive clinical and pharmacological research efforts have led to unprecedented advances in medical diagnosis and treatment, contributing significantly to ever-increasing life expectancy. One inevitable consequence of these developments has been the intense specialization and growing fragmentation of medicine and the various health professions. In addition, higher life expectancy is associated with an increase in the prevalence of chronic disorders and multimorbidity, placing heavy demands on economic resources. There is a risk of health services being stretched to their limits.

The challenge for a sustainable, forward-looking healthcare system lies in the adoption of appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic measures, while giving due consideration to health-economic aspects. Investigating where this is required and how it can be achieved most effectively is the subject of what is known as "health services research". This field of research is becoming increasingly important at the international level. With the aid of a new funding programme, the Bangerter-Stiftung and the SAMS hope that health services research will also become more widely established in Switzerland.

As primary care is of particular importance with regard to comprehensive and integrated delivery of health services to the public, it is one of the priorities defined for the funding programme.

Goals

The Gottfried and Julia Bangerter-Rhyner-Stiftung (Bangerter-Stiftung) and the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS) are jointly launching a "Health Services Research" funding programme. The aims of this initiative, which will run in the first instance from 2012 to 2016, are as follows:

- in the medium to long term, to build research capacity and infrastructure in the field of health services research in Switzerland;
- to facilitate high-quality projects in the field of health services research in the broadest sense;
- to support the development of young researchers in this area; and
- to provide a stimulus which will in future enable this branch of research to compete successfully with other areas in efforts to obtain funding.

To this end, the Bangerter-Stiftung is making available around CHF 1 million per year in funding for the period 2012–2016.

Areas eligible for support

The term "health services research" covers a wide range of research questions. In line with Pfaff's definition of the corresponding German term (2003¹), the programme defines health services research as "transdisciplinary research which describes and provides causal explanations of the patient care and healthcare framework, supports the development of evidence-based care concepts, studies the implementation of new care concepts, and evaluates the effectiveness of care structures and processes under everyday conditions".

In accordance with the areas demarcated by the German Medical Association², the following are classified unreservedly as health services research:

- Basic research in care-related areas (e.g. cognitive and communicative processes, compliance, physicians' attitudes, determinants of medical decision-making)
- Quality research (e.g. quality assurance/development/management) relating to care services
- Studies of economic aspects of care
- Utilization research, demand research, other studies on the epidemiology of healthcare
- Methodological developments in health services research (e.g. risk adjustment, multivariate models, survey instruments)
- Clinical studies, meta-analyses and systematic reviews of effectiveness
- Health technology assessments (HTAs) concerned with effectiveness or utility
- Studies of drugs and medical devices under everyday conditions (Phase IV studies)
- Studies of the implementation of new findings of basic research in medical practice (e.g. in the areas of translational research or personalized medicine)
- Development and application of new information technologies (e.g. e-health)

Areas not classified as health services research include:

- HTAs, meta-analyses and systematic reviews concerned solely with efficacy
- clinical studies of efficacy (i.e. conducted under ideal conditions)
- Phase I–III drug studies
- Studies investigating not explicitly health-related service providers
- Analytical epidemiology for the determination of causes and risks, not relating to specific forms of care.
- Cell culture and animal experiments

¹ Pfaff, H. (2003). Versorgungsforschung - Begriffsbestimmung, Gegenstand und Aufgaben. In H. Pfaff, M. Schrappe, K. W. Lauterbach, U. Engelmann & M. Halber (Eds.), *Gesundheitsversorgung und Disease Management: Grundlagen und Anwendungen der Versorgungsforschung* (pp. 13-23). Bern: Huber.

² List adapted from: www.bundesaerztekammer.de/page.asp?his=0.6.3289.3293.3295&all=true

Funding instruments and criteria (type; level; duration)

To achieve the goals of the funding programme, various instruments will be used:

A. Seed money

- For the elaboration of project ideas, implementation of pilot projects, development and evaluation of methods, etc.
- One-time award of a maximum of CHF 25,000 per application

B. Project funding

- For the implementation of research projects
- In general, a maximum of CHF 100,000 per application per year, for no longer than 3 years

C. Personal scholarships/loans

- Visits abroad for training or continuing education purposes for young scientists in the health services research field
- In general, a maximum of CHF 40,000 per person per year, for no longer than 2 years
- Half of the sum will normally be awarded as a scholarship and half as a loan

D. Support for continuing education events

- Funding of seminars or continuing education events designed to promote methodological expertise or disseminate results
- In general, a maximum of CHF 15,000 per application, available each year

In reviewing applications, the Expert Committee is guided by the following criteria:

- Scientific quality of the project
- Benefits, relevance, innovation, sustainability of the project
- Applicant's professional qualifications
- Scientific networks

Calls for proposals

The funding programme will be publicized twice a year via advertisements in the *Schweizerische Ärztezeitung*, *Swiss Medical Weekly*, *Primary Care* and *Revue Médicale Suisse*, and via the usual information channels of the SAMS (bulletin, website, newsletter) and the Bangerter-Stiftung (website).

Submission of applications

To be eligible, applicants should be health professionals working in Switzerland, generally with academic qualifications and an institutional affiliation.

Applications are to be submitted electronically, using the form available online, together with the documents specified therein.

The deadlines for submissions are **1 March and 1 September**. The documents are to be sent to: info@bangerter-stiftung.ch

Applications will be reviewed by an Expert Committee of the SAMS, which will make recommendations to the Board of the Bangerter-Stiftung as to which proposals should be

supported. The final decision on support for proposals rests with the Board (cf. "Organization of the funding programme" below).

Organization of the funding programme

The foundation secretariat at the Swiss Trust Company AG is responsible for the programme's administrative secretariat, where applications are submitted and registered. The foundation secretariat also notifies applicants of decisions made by the Board. In addition, the foundation secretariat is responsible for the financial aspects, or accounts, of the funding programme. When the deadline for submissions has expired, the foundation secretariat will forward all the applications received to the General Secretariat of the SAMS.

The General Secretariat of the SAMS is responsible for the programme's scientific secretariat; here, applications are checked for completeness, documents are prepared for the Expert Committee and evaluation meetings are organized. The SAMS summarizes the Expert Committee's arguments for or against a funding recommendation and submits these to the Board of the Bangerter-Stiftung. In addition, the SAMS is responsible for answering applicants' technical queries and for PR activities relating to the programme.

Applications are reviewed by an Expert Committee of the SAMS, comprising representatives of various disciplines (e.g. translational/personalized medicine, family medicine/outpatient internal medicine, paediatrics, and other branches of clinical medicine, social and preventive medicine [public health], epidemiology, nursing sciences, social sciences and rehabilitation). The Committee members are appointed by the Senate of the SAMS. The President of the SAMS is an ex officio member of the Committee. The Expert Committee decides which of the proposals should be passed to the Board of the Bangerter-Stiftung with a recommendation for funding.

The Board of the Bangerter-Stiftung is responsible for the granting of funds. From the proposals for which funding has been recommended, the Board selects those which are to be supported. As far as possible, applicants are to be notified within four months after the deadline for submissions.

Disbursement

Funds are disbursed by the Bangerter-Stiftung either on one occasion or in annual tranches.

Terms and conditions

Before funds are disbursed, the recipients are required to sign an agreement which specifies, inter alia, that they are obliged to submit an interim scientific report annually (this is a precondition for the disbursement of any further tranches) and a final report at the end of the project/scholarship.

Successful applicants will be expected to participate in an annual "Health Services Research" symposium organized by the SAMS, where their projects are to be presented.

Recipients of funding under the "Health Services Research" programme are to acknowledge the support provided in all publications or posters, presentations, etc., at least as follows: *This research project was supported by the "Health Services Research" funding programme of the Gottfried and Julia Bangerter-Rhyner-Stiftung and the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences.*