We are seeking highly qualified postdoctoral applicants with an MD, PhD, or MD/PhD, for the Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation/Developmental Synaptopathies Consortium Young Investigator Fellowship.

The ideal candidate has a clinical and/or research background in psychiatry, psychology, or neurology with a focus on neurodevelopmental disorders, and seeks to complement their expertise to become a leader in this growing field.

The fellow will help characterize neuropsychiatric phenotypes in patients with Phelan-McDermid syndrome (PMS). PMS is a rare genetic condition caused by a deletion or other structural change of the terminal region of chromosome 22 or a disease-causing sequence variant of the \textit{SHANK3} gene. PMS is commonly associated with hypotonia, intellectual disability, and delayed or absent speech. Data is emerging that a subset of individuals with PMS experience devastating psychiatric symptoms, such as regression, bipolar disorder, and catatonia. The goal of this fellowship is to deeply characterize these psychiatric symptoms and/or explore their biological underpinnings.

The fellow will work within the NIH-funded Developmental Synaptopathies Consortium (DSC), a Rare Disease Clinical Research Network, under the training of leaders in the field with a pre-established infrastructure for recruiting and phenotyping large numbers of individuals with this rare disorder.

The training environment afforded by the Consortium includes access to PMS investigators, clinicians, and affected individuals, as well as interaction with other groups working on related genetic disorders - Tuberous Sclerosis Complex and PTEN Hamartoma Tumor Syndrome. Priority will be given to fellows motivated to utilize the rich datasets that have been generated by the DSC, including genetic, behavioral phenotyping, electrophysiological studies, neuroimaging and biosample collections. Areas of potential research include, but are not limited to, mechanistic studies of neuropsychiatric decompensation and regression in PMS, deep phenotyping of
neuropsychiatric symptoms in PMS, development of clinical guidelines for assessment and care of people with PMS who experience neuropsychiatric decompensation, and outcome measure development for use in clinical trials in PMS. Details describing the research resources available through the DSC will be described in an Appendix with the Request for Applications (coming soon).

Funding Mechanism Available in 2022

Fellowship Details:

- Two years in duration, MD/PhD level candidates.
  - Includes salary, fringe and research stipend up to $110,000 per year ($100,000 direct costs, $10,000 indirect)
- Eligible as described below in the Eligibility section
- Application components will be described in detail in the Request for Applications (coming soon) and will include a current CV, a cover letter, a career plan, NIH-style aims of the research proposed for the fellowship, and two letters of support. Applicants will also be asked to connect with a mentor from a list of DSC members with aligned research interests at one of the five research sites: Boston Children’s Hospital, National Institute of Mental Health, Rush University Medical Center, Stanford University and Seaver Autism Center at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.
- Priority will be given to applicants that leverage the resources being developed within the DSC – which will be listed in an Appendix within the Request for Applications.
- Applications will be evaluated by a review committee led by PMS Research leadership and the DSC leadership.
- This fellowship award is intended to provide funding for a project directly relevant to PMS. The award is intended to fund the applicant’s salary and some of the laboratory supplies or tools necessary to conduct the proposed research. The award is not intended to fund technical support for the project or to purchase equipment in the Mentor’s laboratory. The trainee applicant is considered to be the “Principal Investigator” for the purpose of postdoctoral fellowship awards.

Key Dates

- Online submission for proposals: September 13, 2021 – January 14, 2022 at 11:59 p.m. US EDT
- Earliest project start date: April 1, 2022

Eligibility

This opportunity is open to all early career investigators eligible to work at any of the Developmental Synaptopathies Consortium PMS sites: Boston Children’s Hospital, National Institute of Mental Health, Rush University Medical Center, Stanford
University, and Seaver Autism Center at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Applicants will connect with a mentor at their site during the application process. **If not located at a DSC site as above:** the applicant must identify an investigator(s) from any of the DSC sites with complementary research interests and connect with them during the application process. The applicant’s institution is where the proposed work will take place. The mentor must be at a DSC site (though applicant may not be at DSC site). **A list of possible mentors will be included in the Request for Applications.**

Researchers residing in the United States do not need to be U.S. citizens to apply for funding. Funding is not restricted to US residents or citizens.

A detailed Request for Applications and application link will follow.

**For Grant-Related Inquiries, Contact:** TNC@childrens.harvard.edu

If you are interested in being directly contacted with the Request for Applications when it becomes available, please email admin@pmsf.org expressing interest.