Request for Applications

IMPACT Funding Opportunity Number: RFA-IMPACT-21-HCS-01

Health Care Systems Scholars Program

HCS Scholars Program for research investigators partnering with health care systems to improve care for people living with Alzheimer’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease-related dementias (AD/ADRD) and their care partners

KEY DATES:

- Request for Applications – Released
  - February 1, 2021
- Informational Webinar
  - February 11, 2021 @ 1pm ET
- Letters of Intent Due – Required
  - March 1, 2021 @ 5pm ET
- Letters of Intent – Notification
  - March 22, 2021
- Full Applications Due – By invitation only
  - May 3, 2021 @ 5pm ET
- Applicant Notified of Decisions
  - May 24, 2021
The National Institute on Aging (NIA) Imbedded Pragmatic Alzheimer’s Disease and Alzheimer’s Disease-Related Dementias (AD/ADRD) Clinical Trials (IMPACT) Collaboratory (U54AG063546) was established in 2019 to build the nation’s capacity to conduct pragmatic clinical trials (ePCTs) of non-pharmacological interventions embedded within health care systems to improve the care of people living with AD/ADRD and their care partners.

The NIA IMPACT Collaboratory is launching a new Health Care Systems (HCS) Embedded Research Program: HCS Scholars. This program offers both junior and senior investigators an opportunity to work directly with health care systems interested in improving the care provided to people living with dementia (PLWD) and their care partners (CP). Ranging from managed care programs to integrated delivery systems to long-term care companies, throughout the HCS, there is the increasing recognition that PLWD present unique challenges to care delivery for which the standard practice model doesn't work. PLWD incur higher costs, require more time during primary care visits, have more avoidable hospital and emergency department visits and even those with mild cognitive impairment are more likely to experience disruptive transitions during post-acute rehabilitation care. While HCS recognize these challenges, the constant pressures of providing care makes it difficult to devote the resources to restructuring the way care is delivered to this population in order to overcome system-level issues.

The goals of the HCS Embedded Research Program are to embed an investigator in a health care system in order to:

1. Provide a mutually beneficial partnership to improve the care of PLWD and CP
2. Train investigators about the needs of health care settings and to obtain on-the-ground knowledge about how new programs are successfully introduced at all levels of the organization (e.g., front-line providers to c-suite)
3. Engage HCS in learning more about what it means to conduct an ePCTs in their health care settings and to provide resources for understanding opportunities for improvement in dementia care or evaluation of related quality improvement projects
4. Strengthen collaborations between investigators and HCS in order to lead to pilot projects or demonstration ePCTs

Applicants are expected to apply together with a health care setting already identified and with which they have an existing or previous relationship. For partnerships that are newer and developing, program activities could focus on establishing a firm foundation to result in the submission of IMPACT Collaboratory Pilot Program grant application. For more established partnerships, program activities could focus on deepening the relationships in preparation for submitting a larger Demonstration Project grant through the IMPACT Collaboratory. Examples of potential proposed program activities include meetings with health care setting staff at multiple levels to understand barriers and facilitators in providing care for PLWD and CP building relationships with staff at multiple sites across an organization, conducting analysis of
Program Activities continued

administrative data to characterize the care provided to PLWD, or evaluating an ongoing pilot program the HCS has implemented. Successful applications will clearly define the mutual benefit of the program for both the investigator and HCS.

The IMPACT Collaboratory Health Care Systems Core can provide guidance to investigators in finding potential partners that match their skills and interests with the needs of health care systems for future applications. HCS partners include, but are not limited to, large integrated health systems, academic medical centers, payors like Medicare Advantage plans, and other acute, post-acute, long-term, and community care settings that provide care for PLWD and their CP. Placement may be in-person or virtual.

Informational Webinar

An optional informational webinar about the program will be hosted by the Health Care Systems Core to provide investigators with an overview of program and application details. Investigators will have the opportunity to ask questions. Pre-registration is required using the link below.

- Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 1:00 PM ET: Register here for webinar.

The informational webinar will be recorded and posted online at https://impactcollaboratory.org/HCS-scholars/.

Frequently Asked Questions

A set of frequently asked questions (FAQ) regarding this program will be available online February 16, 2021 at https://impactcollaboratory.org/HCS-Scholars-faq/.

Award Information

Awards are for one year, up to $120,000 in direct costs with an indirect cost rate capped at 8%.

Eligibility

Junior and senior investigators are encouraged to apply. Applicants may hold a faculty or research scientist position at an academic institution or be an investigator embedded within a HCS within the United States. No research may be performed outside of the United States.

Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Applicants from under-represented racial and ethnic groups as well as individuals with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

How to Apply

There is a competitive two-step application process:

Interested applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) form here. LOIs may be submitted on a rolling basis but no later than March 1, 2021 at 5 pm ET.

STEP 1: LETTER OF INTENT

The LOI includes an upload of the applicant's NIH Biosketch and short statements (500 words or less) that describe:

1. Your interests and aspirations related to non-pharmacological interventions to improve dementia care and embedded pragmatic clinical trials
2. A description of the identified health care setting partner, your relationship with the organization and its leaders, and your past activities together
3. How your work could impact PLWD and CP
4. Your goals for participating in the HCS Scholars program and anticipated outcomes (e.g., IMPACT pilot grant application)

No budget information is required for the LOI step. LOI decisions will be provided on or before March 22, 2021 at 5 pm ET.

**STEP 2: FULL PROPOSALS BY INVITATION ONLY**

Prospective candidates selected for further consideration will be invited to submit a full application due no later than May 3, 2021 at 5 pm ET.

**Smartsheet Application:** Full applications will be submitted online using a Smartsheet form similar to the LOI form. Access to the HCS Scholars application will be provided to those invited to submit full proposals.

**Proposal Content:**

Full applications will include the following sections, with items 1-6 not exceeding a total of 6 pages; each item 1-6 is not to exceed one page (Arial Font 11):

1. Aims/Goals for Participation in the Health Care System Scholars Program
2. Investigator Background and Career Goals
3. Health Care System Background, Description of AD/ADRD Populations Served and Key Challenges in Caring for Them, and Goals for Partnering
4. Proposed Activities Including Partnering Plan
5. Timeline & Milestones
6. Future Directions
7. Letters of Support (*not included in page limits*)
   a. A letter of support is required from a leader within the proposed health care setting. The letter should provide a statement indicating the commitment of the health care setting to the scholar, overview of AD/ADRD population they serve and commitment to improve their care, the specific proposed activities (e.g., meetings with individuals in the health care setting, use of data, etc), alignment of these activities with their organization’s goals, and anticipated outcomes (e.g., pilot study of an ePCT).
   b. A letter of support is required from the applicant’s supervisor (e.g, Department Chair) that addresses their commitment to conducting AD/ADRD research in HCS, the fit with the HCS Scholars Program, and that they agree to allow the applicant to spend the proposed percent effort on the program’s activities and that they agree to allow the applicant to spend the proposed percent effort on the program’s activities.
Full Proposal Requirements continued

c. If the proposed partnerships involve an additional mentor or colleague, an optional third letter of support will be allowed. This letter of support will address commitment to the activities described, the applicant’s commitment to conducting AD/ADRD research in HCS, and the fit with the HCS Scholars Program.

Questions?

For eligibility and program-related questions, please contact Rachel Hays, Project Manager, IMPACT Health Care Systems Core at Rachel.J.Hays@kp.org.

Budget Considerations:

A budget detailing research-related expenses and salary support with an accompanying budget justification is required. Support can include salary and travel (post-pandemic) for the investigator and administrative support for the HCS to facilitate data access and other resources. The expected time commitment would be 25% to 35% of an investigator’s effort for up to one year. Applicants should include costs for the investigator travel and accommodation to one 2.5 day in-person IMPACT Collaboratory Meeting in Bethesda, Maryland (assuming no restrictions on travel due to COVID-19) during the fellowship period.