



AXA
Research Fund

**Towards an improved and
better supported Mental Health
Call for proposals**

April 15, 2019

Towards an improved and better supported Mental Health

This **call** aims to identify and support **future research leaders in improving Mental Health**.

According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, “**Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community**”. The WHO also notes that mental health is “more than the absence of mental disorders”, constitutes “an integral part of health”, is “determined by a range of socioeconomic, biological and environmental factors”, and that “cost-effective public health and intersectoral strategies and interventions exist to promote, protect and restore mental health.”

The mental health topic is complex and critical. The burden of mental disorders **continues to expand with the diagnosis of previously ignored diseases, with significant impacts on human health and major social consequences in all countries of the world**, as illustrated by the following facts and figures:

1. 27% of the adult population (aged 18–65) experienced at least one mental disorder in the past year (including, problems arising from substance use, psychoses, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders)¹.
2. Worldwide, 10-20% of children and adolescents experience mental disorders or problems.²
3. Mental and substance use disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide³.
4. About 800,000 people commit suicide every year – nearly 80% of them occurring in low- and middle-income countries⁴.
5. War and disasters have a large impact on mental health and psychosocial well-being⁵.
6. Mental disorders are important risk factors for other diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, as well as unintentional and intentional injury⁶.
7. Stigma and discrimination against patients and families prevent people from seeking mental health care⁷.
8. The workplace has been identified as one of the most important social contexts in which to address mental health problems, and promote mental health and wellbeing¹. As an illustration, about 11% of workers’ sick days in Britain are due to mental-health problems⁸. A literature review found the following key work factors to be associated with mental ill health: long working hours; work overload and pressure,

¹ https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/index1.html

² https://www.who.int/mental_health/maternal-child/child_adolescent/en/;

³ https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/index1.html

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>

⁵ https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/index3.html

⁶ https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/index4.html

⁷ https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/index5.html

⁸ <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/03/16/most-mental-health-problems-are-untreated-trained-laypeople-can-help>

lack of control; lack of opportunity to participate in decision making; poor social support; and unclear management and work role⁹.

The rise in mental ill health presents **a growing global economic burden**, as was recognized by political and economic leaders who placed it at the top of the 2019 World Economic Forum healthcare agenda. According to 2018 report of the Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development¹⁰, **mental ill health is expected to cost the world \$16 USD trillion by 2030**. The economic cost is primarily due to lost productivity, with an estimated 12 billion working days lost due to mental illness every year¹¹.

Depression and anxiety result, according to the WHO, in an estimated cost to the global economy of \$ 1 USD trillion per year in lost productivity¹². This is aligned with previous estimates, according to which the annual cost of **burnout** (syndrome characterized by “a combination of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment caused by chronic occupational stress “¹³) to the global economy, notably through decreased productivity, absenteeism and compensation costs, exceeds \$300 billion (Rowe, 2012). However despite increasing medical interest, the “burn out syndrome” is not yet formally included within the standard classification of mental disorders¹³.

At AXA, as a leading insurer, and in line with our societal mission, we believe we have a role to play in providing access to mental health care and that we need a better understanding of this issue. Research can be key to understand mental health, through better prevention, access to health care, and appropriate treatment including support therapy. **In this context, the AXA Research Fund, the scientific philanthropy initiative of AXA Group, is launching a call for projects dedicated to mental health disorders and associated risks.**

This **call is to fund** transdisciplinary research topics adopting either a global perspective or focusing on regional challenges for **improving Mental Health**. Projects will tackle mental health issues from various angles: incidence and extent, prevention, detection, screening, treatment, monitoring, social attitudes, and psychological support - in the following areas:

⁹ Michie & William, Reducing work related psychological ill health and sickness absence: a systematic literature review, 2003 - <https://oem.bmj.com/content/60/1/3>

¹⁰ The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development brought together 28 global experts in psychiatry, public health, neuroscience, and advocacy as well as people with first-hand experience of mental health conditions.

¹¹ <https://globalmentalhealthcommission.org/press-release>

¹² https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/

¹³ Renzo Bianchi, Irvin Sam Schonfeld and Eric Laurent in “Is It Time to Consider the “Burnout Syndrome” A Distinct Illness?” - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4459038/>

¹³ Renzo Bianchi, Irvin Sam Schonfeld and Eric Laurent in “Is It Time to Consider the “Burnout Syndrome” A Distinct Illness?” - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4459038/>

- **Addiction - including those related to substances, games, internet and technology**
- **Anxiety & panic disorders**
- **Autism spectrum disorders**
- **Bipolar disorders**
- **Depression**
- **Eating Disorders – especially anorexia, bulimia, food addiction**
- **Post-traumatic stress disorders**
- **Schizophrenia and psychotic disorders**
- **Sleep disorders**
- **Stress, burnout and other aspects of mental health in the workplace**

Analysis will also be welcome in identifying in what contexts such mental health problems are more likely to occur, such as economic and social status of households (rich/poor; particular ethnic groups), location (rural/urban, depressed or well off areas), developing or developed countries.

AXA Fellowships Guidelines

The AXA Research Fund's mission is to support outstanding researchers and committed to improving peoples' lives through innovative research in areas of Climate & Environment, Health, New Technologies, and Socio-Economics.

AXA Research Fund

AXA Fellowships aim at supporting promising researchers (max. PhD+5 years²) on a topic aligned with AXA's priorities and societal challenges. The support of the AXA Research Fund should be transformative for the researcher and the advancement of their field.

Duration

An AXA Postdoctoral Fellowship is awarded for a period of 2 years.

Institution eligibility

The project calls are global, however, the AXA Research Fund partners with academic institutions only; NGOs, governmental bodies, foundations, independent research centers, cultural institutions (such as museums), hospitals are not eligible.

Researcher

Candidates should be of the highest caliber and have demonstrated outstanding research achievements, as evidenced by the usual indicators for assessing academic excellence such as research outputs (e.g. publications), research activities (e.g. organizing networks, being involved in communities) and research impact (e.g. policy report, specific recognition through awards, etc.).

Candidates must be awarded their PhD before they submit their Expression of Interest, at the latest on May 20th, 2019.

Institutions can submit only one candidate per topic, i.e. one on Mental Health **AND/OR** one on Cyber Risk. In case of two Expressions of Interest from one institution submitted for the same call (i.e. the same topic), both applications would be disqualified.

Research program

The research program should demonstrate its scientific originality and innovative nature and have the potential to contribute to a step change in the considered field. It is the responsibility of the institution to demonstrate the relevance of the proposed research topic to the AXA Research Fund.

Engagement

It is a requirement that researchers would be proactive in engaging science with society when supported by the AXA Research Fund and use an open-data framework when

² There is a flexibility of 6 months regarding PhD date (i.e. PhD max 5 full years + 6 months), at the Expression of Interest date (i.e. May,20,2019) i.e. PhD awarded after November 20,2013.

applicable. Our researchers commit to share their project and communicate their research to a broad audience, supported by the AXA Research Fund.

Diversity

Diversity will be an important criterion in the selection process whether in the research topic, gender or geography. Furthermore, attention will be brought to the opportunity for the grant to deliver a significant step-change in the career of the grantee.

Budget

An AXA Fellowship is awarded for a maximum amount of 125,000€. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit a carefully calibrated budget, appropriate for the ambition of the research program and justified in a detailed and coherent manner. Budget will cover:

- Annual salary of the researcher (based on institution internal policy)
- Equipment/ resources (databases, survey costs, consumables, etc.), academic activities (conferences, workshops, fieldwork, etc.)
- Outreach activities (beyond academic audiences).

Any other type of costs not listed above should be justified in the application template. No overhead costs can be eligible.

Host institutions will be expected to participate in the AXA Fellowship's general funding with studentships, PhD support and material resources related to the research program. The Institution shall demonstrate this participation in the section dedicated to the budget in the application form.

Ethics

The AXA Research Fund places extremely high importance on the ethics of the work it supports. Programs are required to comply fully with all relevant ethical review processes and for this compliance to be evidenced. Cases of scientific misconduct (such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or of inappropriate behavior towards staff or other parties) will be considered as breaches of the AXA ethical principles³ and will be excluded from funding.

Intellectual property

The researcher and the host institution remain fully independent to conduct the research project. AXA will not claim any right to the ownership or use of the results.

³ AXA Group Compliance and Ethics Guide, 2011:

<https://www.axa.com/en/newsroom/publications/compliance-ethics-guide>

Timeline & Application process

The AXA Research Fund evaluation process has been designed to assess scientific excellence. The evaluations are monitored to ensure transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

The AXA Research Fund partners with independent external providers to carry out the peer review process in accordance with criteria defined with the AXA Research Fund, the results of which are submitted to the scientific board for final selection.

Please note that:

- The application must be submitted in English, on time, online, and complete. It must respect the template structure and the page limit.
- The research topic must fall within the scope of the eligible topic focus as listed above.
- The candidate must submit a free standing independent research project involving full-time work for the duration of the fellowship (with an exceptional acceptance of up to 20% time dedicated to teaching).

Timeline

Host institution Phase	Step 1 - Registration <i>Only if your institution is not already registered on the AXA Research Fund's online platform.</i>	April 15, 2019 to May 20, 2019
	Step 2 - Expression of interest <i>on the AXA RF platform</i>	April 15, 2019 to May 20, 2019 4 PM Paris time
Researcher's phase	Step 3 - Research proposal submission <i>on our partner organization's platform (online link to be provided on due time)</i>	May 23, 2019 to June 17, 2019 11 AM Paris time
	Step 5 - Rebuttal <i>on our partner organization's platform</i>	October 15, 2019 – October 21 st , 2019
AXA RF	Results announcement	November 30, 2019

Projects selected for funding are expected to start between December 2019 and September 2020.

Application process

Step 1 – Registering

To apply for the AXA Fellowship grants, academic institutions must be registered on our platform: <https://institution.axa-research.org/>. You can check if your institution is already registered in the database via the above link. If your institution is already on our database, you can omit the registration and your institution’s operational contact can log in directly using the login details they defined.

Institutions should appoint a single point of contact (“Operational Contact”) who will handle relations with the AXA Research Fund.

Step 2 – Expression of Interest **ON OUR ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM**

To submit an online Expression of Interest, host institutions need to follow the steps below:

- 1/ Log onto our online application platform: <https://institution.axa-research.org/>
- 2/ Go to the “Application” tab and click the “Post-doc” link to go to the “Expression of Interest” page
- 3/ Click “New” and fill in the online Expression of Interest form. Attach a short CV (3 pages maximum)
- 4/ Click “Submit”

At the stage of Expression of Interest, you will be requested to provide the following information:

- About the candidate
 - Name, last name
 - Birth date
 - PhD defense date
 - Current university he/she is affiliated with
 - Short CV (3 pages maximum)
- About the research program
 - Project’s description: 3000 characters including spaces

You will receive an email confirming that your Expression of Interest has been submitted. If you don’t receive the email, please check your spam folder or contact fellowships@axa.com

You will be able to edit your Expression of Interest as long as you have not clicked on “Submit”. Once submitted, your Expression of Interest can no longer be edited. The Expression of Interest will be reviewed by the AXA Research Fund team. You will be informed of the decision pertaining to your Expression of Interest by email.

Expression of Interest received after the deadline or by email will not be considered.

Step 3 – Full Application

Academic institutions will be given an access to a dedicated platform to nominate their candidate by entering his/her name & email address online. **Please note that only one candidate per institution will be considered on a given topic - i.e. one candidate on Mental Health AND/OR one candidate on Cyber Risk.** Nominated candidates will be invited to submit their research proposals and will be provided with the necessary information to access the application form. Eligibility criteria of the application call will be screened by our partner organization.

Candidates will have maximum 3 weeks to submit their proposals through our partner's platform. Please note that if the host institution doesn't nominate the candidate on that platform, the candidate won't have access to the platform.

Step 4 – Scientific assessment

The evaluation of the scientific quality of research proposals is carried out in a fully independent manner by our partner per review organization.

Each application is reviewed by two relevant experts who will assess the candidate's excellence and the research program's scientific quality.

Step 5 – Rebuttal

Candidates will have the opportunity to respond online to peer review experts' comments before their applications are reviewed by the AXA Research Fund. The main purpose of the rebuttal is to provide applicants with the possibility to comment on any potential misinterpretations or misunderstandings that may have been made by the experts while initially assessing their proposals.

Step 6 – Selection & results publication

The Scientific Board of the AXA Research Fund selects to fund applications based on strength of the scientific case, peer review assessments, the potential of the project, candidate profile and of the institution and overall impact. The AXA Research Fund informs the academic institution of the decisions through the institution's representative. Results will also be made available online ([http:// www.axa-research.org/](http://www.axa-research.org/)) and on the dedicated platforms for applicants and institutions.



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