

**US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND MATERIEL COMMAND (USAMRMC)
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
FISCAL YEAR 2016 (FY16) BREAST CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM (BCRP)**

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

The programmatic strategy implemented by the FY16 BCRP called for applications in response to the Era of Hope Scholar Award program announcement (PA) released in March 2016.

In response to the Era of Hope Scholar Award PA, 13 compliant applications were received in May 2016 and peer reviewed in July 2016. Stage 1 programmatic review was conducted in September 2016 and two were invited to Stage 2 programmatic review. Stage 2 programmatic review was conducted in November 2016 and one was recommended for funding for a total of \$2.5 million (M).

Submission and award data for the FY16 BCRP are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY16 BCRP*

Mechanism	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Stage 2 Programmatic Review (%)	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Era of Hope Scholar	13	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	\$2.5M

*These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY16 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2017.

THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM

The USAMRMC developed a review model based on recommendations of the 1993 Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences report, *Strategies for Managing the Breast Cancer Research Program: A Report to the Army Medical Research and Development Command*. The IOM report recommended a two-tier review process and concluded that the best course would be to establish a peer review system that reflects not only the traditional strengths of existing peer review systems, but also is tailored to accommodate program goals. The Command has adhered to this proven approach for evaluating competitive applications. An application must be favorably reviewed by both levels of the two-tier review system to be funded.

THE FIRST TIER—Scientific Peer Review

Era of Hope Scholar Award applications were peer reviewed in July 2016 by one panel of researchers, clinicians, and consumer advocates based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PAs.

The peer review panel included a Chair, scientific reviewers, consumer reviewers, and a nonvoting Scientific Review Officer (SRO). The primary responsibility of the panelists was to

review the technical merit of each application based upon the evaluation criteria specified in the PA.

Individual Peer Review Panel

The Chair presided over the deliberations. Applications were discussed individually. The Chair called upon the assigned reviewers for an assessment of the merits of each application using the evaluation criteria published in the PA. Following a panel discussion, the Chair summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each application, and panel members then rated the applications confidentially.

Application Scoring

In contrast to the typical technical merit review process, no criteria scores were assigned to the Era of Hope Scholar Award applications. Instead, reviewers were asked to address specific questions pertaining to the applicant's qualifications, accomplishments, research goals or ideas, and leadership skills. Each reviewer then voted confidentially on an overall level of enthusiasm (High, Medium, Low).

Summary Statements: The Scientific Review Officer on each panel was responsible for preparing a Summary Statement reporting the results of the peer review for each application. The Summary Statements included the evaluation criteria and overall scores, peer reviewers' written comments, and the essence of panel discussions. This document was used to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. It is the policy of the USAMRMC to make Summary Statements available to each applicant when the review process has been completed.

THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review

Stage 1 programmatic review was conducted in September 2016. Stage 2 programmatic review was conducted in November 2016. Stage 1 and Stage 2 programmatic review was conducted by the FY16 Programmatic Panel, comprised of a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each contributing special expertise or interest in breast cancer. Programmatic review is a comparison-based process that considers scientific evaluations across all disciplines and specialty areas. Programmatic Panel members do not automatically recommend funding applications that were highly rated in the technical merit review process; rather, they carefully scrutinize applications to allocate the limited funds available to support each of the award mechanisms as wisely as possible.

Programmatic review criteria published in the Era of Hope Scholar Award PA were as follows: Stage 1 – Ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer reviewers; relative innovation; and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism; Stage 2 – Understanding of barriers in breast cancer; articulation of a realistic vision with a high potential to impact breast cancer; and leadership capabilities to form partnerships and collaborations that will impact breast cancer. After programmatic review, the Commanding General, USAMRMC, and the Director of the Defense Health Agency, Research, Development and Acquisition Directorate approved funding for the applications recommended during programmatic review.