

**US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND MATERIEL COMMAND (USAMRMC)
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
FISCAL YEAR 2017 (FY17) OVARIAN CANCER RESEARCH PROGRAM (OCRP)**

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

The programmatic strategy implemented by the FY17 OCRP called for applications in response to program announcements (PAs) for four award mechanisms released in May 2017:

- Clinical Development Award
- Investigator-Initiated Research Award
- Ovarian Cancer Academy Award – Early-Career Investigators
- Pilot Award

Pre-applications were received for these four PAs in June 2017 and screened in July 2017 to determine which investigators would be invited to submit a full application. Pre-applications were screened based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PAs.

Applications were received for the Pilot Award PA in August 2017 and for the Clinical Development Award, Investigator-Initiated Research Award, and the Ovarian Cancer Academy Award – Early-Career Investigators PAs in September 2017. All applications were peer reviewed in October 2017 and programmatic review was conducted in December 2017.

In response to the Clinical Development Award PA, 30 pre-applications were received and the Principal Investigators (PIs) of 22 of these were invited to submit a full application. Nineteen (19) compliant applications were received and 7 (36.8%) were recommended for funding for a total of \$7.0 million (M).

In response to the Investigator-Initiated Research Award PA, 192 pre-applications were received and the PIs of 73 of these were invited to submit a full application. Sixty-six (66) compliant applications were received and 5 (7.6%) were recommended for funding for a total of \$3.51M.

In response to the Ovarian Cancer Academy Award – Early-Career Investigators PA, 17 pre-applications were received and the PIs of 11 of these were invited to submit a full application. Nine (9) compliant applications were received and 2 (22.2%) were recommended for funding for a total of \$2.12 M.

In response to the Pilot Award PA, 187 pre-applications were received and the PIs of 99 of these were invited to submit a full application. Ninety-five (95) compliant applications were received and 10 (10.5%) were recommended for funding for a total of \$3.47M.

Submission and award data for the FY17 OCRP are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY17 OCRP*

Mechanism	Pre-Applications Received	Pre-Applications Invited (%)	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Funding (%)	Total Funds
Clinical Development Award	30	22 (73.3%)	19	7 (36.8%)	\$7,006,635
Investigator-Initiated Research Award	192	73 (38.0%)	66	5 (7.6%)	\$3,510,851
Ovarian Cancer Academy – Early-Career Investigator Award	17	11 (64.7%)	9	2 (22.2%)	\$2,125,298
Pilot Award	187	99 (52.9%)	95	10 (10.5%)	\$3,467,303
Total	426	205 (48.1%)	189	24 (12.7%)	\$16,110,087

*These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY17 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2018.

THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM

The USAMRMC developed a review model based on recommendations of the 1993 Institute of Medicine (IOM) (now known as the National Academy of Medicine) 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

Clinical Development Award, Investigator-Initiated Research Award, Ovarian Cancer Academy – Early-Career Investigators Award, and Pilot Award applications were peer reviewed in October 2017 by six panels of researchers, clinicians, and consumer advocates based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PAs.

Peer review for the Clinical Development Award, Investigator-Initiated Research Award, Ovarian Cancer Academy – Early-Career Investigators Award, and Pilot Award applications was conducted by six panels, consisting of 73 scientists/clinicians and 14 consumer reviewers, during an on-site meeting.

Individual Peer Review Panels

The Chair for each panel 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 appropriate 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

Evaluation Criteria Scores: Panel members were asked to rate each peer review evaluation criterion as published in the appropriate PA. A scale of 1 to 10 was used, with 1 representing the lowest merit and 10 the highest merit, using whole numbers only. The main reasons for obtaining the criteria ratings were to (1) place emphasis on the published evaluation criteria and provide guidance to reviewers in determining an appropriate overall score, and (2) provide the applicant, the Programmatic Panel, and the Command with an informed measure of the quality regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each application. The evaluation criteria scores were not averaged or mathematically manipulated in any manner to connect them to the global or percentile scores.

Overall Score: To obtain an overall score, a range of 1.0 to 5.0 was used (1.0 representing the highest merit and 5.0 the lowest merit). Reviewer scoring was permitted in 0.1 increments. Panel member scores were averaged and rounded to arrive at a two-digit number (1.2, 1.9, 2.7, etc.). The following adjectival equivalents were used to guide reviewers: Outstanding (1.0–1.5), Excellent (1.6–2.0), Good (2.1–2.5), Fair (2.6–3.5), and Deficient (3.6–5.0).

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 applicants' abstracts, 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

Programmatic review was conducted in December 2017 by the FY17 Programmatic Panel, comprised of a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each contributing special expertise or interest in ovarian 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 PAs were as follows: ratings and evaluations of the scientific peer review panels; relative innovation (Pilot Award PA); relative impact on ovarian cancer; program portfolio composition and balance; and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism. After programmatic review, the Commanding General, USAMRMC, and the Director of the Defense Health Agency J9, Research and Development Directorate approved funding for the applications recommended during programmatic review.