The Innovative Training Network of the
European Commission **H2020-MSCA-ITN-2020**

SMABEYOND

Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) beyond motoneuron degeneration: multi-system aspects

invites applications for a

PhD student (Early Stage Researcher, ESR)

at the Dubowitz Neuromuscular Centre in the Developmental Neurosciences Department, University College London Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, UK

A 3-year PhD Studentship funded by European Commission H2020 / Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Programme, as part of the EU Innovative Training network SMABEYOND Consortium, is available in the group of Professor Francesco Muntoni at the Dubowitz Neuromuscular Centre in the Developmental Neurosciences Department, University College London Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health. (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/child-health/research/developmental-neurosciences/molecular-neurosciences/dubowitz-neuromuscular-centre).

Organized by the EU SMABEYOND Consortium, this PhD studentship is one of 8 PhD studentships being recruited in partner institutions across Europe on studies on basic and clinical aspects of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a neurodegenerative disorder with multi-system involvement. The research program will focus on the description and analysis of novel intrinsic defects in peripheral organs and cells, the evaluation of molecular functions in selected organs, and translational approaches by designing treatment strategies for peripheral organs and identification of biomarkers. The training program pursued will include research training in the individual laboratories with regular exchange between laboratories for all PhD students, additional training courses and webinars. Partner organizations of SMYBEYOND include Hannover Medical School (Germany, SMABEYOND Coordinator), Utrecht University Medical Center (Netherlands), University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover (Germany), National Research Council Trento (Italy), University Hospital of Cologne (Germany), University College London (United Kingdom), University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom), University Hospital Vall d'Hebron Barcelona (Spain), SMA Europe, German Muscle Foundation, LEITAT, ASCENION, and ROCHE. Therefore, fellows will interact with relevant stakeholders in the area of rare diseases and especially SMA.

The PhD studentship allocated at University College London will carry out studies on characterizing the microvascular defects in SMA patients and the response to novel SMA treatment. The student will also explore the underlying molecular mechanisms involved in vascular defects in SMA, by using SMA iPSCs differentiated into endothelial cells and various molecular technologies, in close collaboration with other EU partners.

Besides professional skills and background, the following eligibility criteria apply (to be demonstrated in the Europass CV): (1) ESRs need to be in their first four years (full-time equivalent) of their research careers. This is measured from the date when they obtained the degree which formally entitles them to embark on a doctorate, either in the country in which the degree was obtained or in the country in which the research training is provided, irrespective of whether or not a doctorate was envisaged. (2) International mobility: Researchers are required to undertake trans-national mobility when taking up the appointment. At the time of selection by the host organization, researchers must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of their host organization for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to their recruitment – unless as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention. (3) Since the entire program is in English, ESRs must demonstrate that their ability to understand and express themselves in both written and spoken English is sufficiently high.

ESR positions will be offered as an employment for three years and start as soon as possible and no later than 30th July 2021. The salary includes a living allowance, a mobility allowance and a family allowance (if married). The guaranteed PhD funding is for 36 months. There will be funding for technical and personal skills training and the possibility to participate in international research events.

The recruitment strategy of SMABEYOND fully complies with the Code of Conduct definition of merit. For example, merit is not just measured by a researcher's grades, but on a range of evaluation criteria, such as teamwork, interdisciplinary knowledge, soft skills and awareness of the policy impact of science.

For any informal enquiries regarding the post at UCL, please contact Dr Haiyan Zhou (Haiyan.zhou@ucl.ac.uk) or Dr Giovanni Baranello (g.baranello@ucl.ac.uk).

Applications (in one pdf file) including Letter of Motivation, CV, publication list (if available), copies of certificates, reasons for wanting to do this PhD and to join the research team at UCL, names and addresses of two referees should be sent to the SMABEYOND coordinator, Hannover Medical School, Hannover, Germany, under the email address: SMABEYOND@mh-hannover.de by 1st May, 2021.