



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**Office for Human
Resources Management
& Development**

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CALL FOR APPLICATIONS (Call ID: 37/2021)

Post/s of Full-Time Research Support Officer III

Project – “Lorcaserin as New Treatment for Absence Epilepsy – A Preclinical Study to pave the way for the clinical trial”

And any other projects undertaken by the Department of Physiology & Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine & Surgery

1. Applications are invited for the post of Research Support Officer to carry out duties in relation to the Lorcaserin as New Treatment for Absence Epilepsy – A Preclinical Study to pave the way for the clinical trial project funded by the University of Malta’s Internal Research Fund. The Research Support Officer may also be required to work on other projects undertaken by the Department of Physiology & Biochemistry within the Faculty of Medicine & Surgery.
2. Applicants should be in possession of a PhD in the area of Neuroscience.

The University of Malta is an Equal Opportunity employer.

3. Applicants must be willing and able to work in Malta.
4. The full-time post is for a period of 12 months and carries an initial remuneration of €31,200 per annum.
5. Candidates must submit their covering letter, a copy of their curriculum vitae, a scanned copy of their certificates (certificates of degrees must be submitted in English), and contact details of at least two referees. Applications must be sent by e-mail to projects.hrmd@um.edu.mt by not later than **Friday, 30 April 2021**.

Late applications will not be considered.

6. Further information about the vacancy may be obtained from:
<https://www.um.edu.mt/hrmd/recruitment/projects>

Office of the University,
Msida, 16 February 2021

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Further Information

1. The project Lorcaserin as New Treatment for Absence Epilepsy – A Preclinical Study to pave the way for the clinical trial project deals with the potential antiepileptic role of the 5-HT_{2C} receptor activation in the most common childhood absence epilepsy. Absence seizures (ASs) are a feature of many idiopathic generalised epilepsies, but their pathophysiological mechanisms are still not fully understood, and pharmacological treatment is only effective in 50-80% of patients. The thalamus has been identified as an important brain region for AS generation, and contains brain cells which communicate via chemicals called neurotransmitters. Two of these are GABA and serotonin (5-HT). We have recently shown an increase of a novel form of GABA activity called ‘tonic GABAA inhibition’ in the thalamus of animal models of absence epilepsy, and demonstrated that this increase is required for seizure generation. Although tonic GABAA inhibition could be an ideal pharmacological target for the treatment of ASs, there are no drugs capable of selectively decreasing it. A promising strategy, therefore, may be to normalise this form of inhibition by an indirect action via other neurotransmitter systems. This project will investigate whether 5-HT modulates tonic GABAA inhibition in thalamus, using cutting-edge in vivo and in vitro techniques. We will provide evidence for thalamic 5-HT dysfunction in absence epilepsy and identify potential targets that may in the medium term lead to novel anti-absence drugs.

Further information may be obtained by contacting Professor Giuseppe Di Giovanni at giuseppe.digiovanni@um.edu.mt. The Research Support Officer may also be required to work on other projects undertaken by the Department of Physiology & Biochemistry, Faculty for Medicine & Surgery.

2. The appointee will be expected to undertake the following tasks:
- a. develop and implement in vitro patch-clamp electrophysiological protocols and assays to understand neuronal and circuit-level function in both normal and diseased brains;
 - b. train new personnel on in vitro electrophysiology techniques;
 - c. produce deliverables and related reports within the stipulated time frames as specified in the project description;
 - d. keep detailed progress reports and abide to all the conditions imposed by the project;
 - e. assist in the dissemination process with the relevant stakeholders;
 - f. attend project internal meetings and consortium meetings;

- g. travel and attend meetings/conferences as the need arises;
 - h. take part in the submission of EU-funded research proposals to sustain related research beyond the funding of the project; and
 - i. perform any other project related task as instructed by the project coordinator and key experts.
3. The appointee will be expected to work at such places and during such hours as may be determined by the University authorities.
4. The selection procedure will involve:
- a. scrutiny of qualifications and experience claimed and supported by testimonials and/or certificates (copies to be included with the application);
 - b. shortlisting; and
 - c. an interview and / or extended interview.
5. The post is for a period of 12 months, which will be subject to a probationary period and to the provisions of the Statutes, Regulations and Bye-Laws of the University of Malta which are now or which may hereafter be in force.

Office of the University,
Msida, 16 February 2021