

NIH-Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Fellowship

JSPS Fellowship:

The NIH-JSPS Fellowship was created in 1995 to promote bilateral cooperation between NIH and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) foundation. The latter is the largest, government-supported Japanese agency that provides fellowships to Japanese scientists. The NIH-JSPS Fellowship provides a two-year stipend to Japanese post-docs working within NIH intramural labs. Every year about 15 post-docs receive the award.

Eligibility: The JSPS stipulates that applicants must be Japanese and have a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree. The eligible applicants must be working in an NIH intramural research program laboratory (in most cases as Visiting Fellow, but in some cases as a Special Volunteer) or be starting their appointment within a year.

Application: The Fogarty International Center will distribute the application form to all eligible candidates at the NIH. Applicants then submit their application package containing (1) a 3-page research proposal, (2) a statement on previous research, and (3) a statement on the significance of working in the sponsoring NIH lab. These three items must be written in English and Japanese. Applicants prepare their own applications, but sponsors must provide a letter of endorsement.

Selection: The NIH-JSPS Fellowship review panel is formed every year, comprising 6 to 9 NIH intramural scientists and chaired by Dr. Keiko Ozato. The panel evaluates and ranks the applications on the basis of (1) the scientific quality of the proposal, (2) the applicant's record, and (3) the activity of and compatibility with the sponsoring lab. The recommendation is submitted to the JSPS office in Tokyo, which makes the final decision on selection. The NIH panel's recommendation always has been honored.

Appointment: Those who receive this fellowship must be designated as a Postdoctoral Fellow (Supplemental Visiting Fellow mechanism) and cannot be a Guest Researcher or Special Volunteer. Since the JSPS stipend for certain NIH-JSPS recipients may exceed the top of the NIH postdoctoral stipend range, based on years of experience, the NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR) has provided a blanket exception for all recipients of this competitive fellowship to "Section O. Supplemental Funding" in the NIH Intramural Visiting Fellow Program manual issuance (<http://oma.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/person/2300-320-3/>) so that they can all be funded as Supplemental Visiting Fellows. That is, given the competitive nature of the NIH-JSPS program, a special DDIR exception is made to allow NIH-JSPS fellows to have stipends (the combined amount from JSPS and NIH supplemental funding) that are in the range for postdoctoral fellows with an additional year of experience. Thus, all NIH-JSPS fellows should be Postdoctoral Fellow appointed under the Supplemental VF mechanism and the sponsoring NIH institute or center should also support their health insurance. Although there could be fluctuations in currency exchange (Japan Yen to US Dollars), the total stipend may only be adjusted once per year, at the initial appointment and upon the annual renewal. The IC is not obligated to supplement the stipend to the original amount noted in Yen when the Yen has fallen, but is obligated to supplement sufficiently for the fellow to receive a total stipend that is within their appropriate level of postdoctoral research experience range on the VF stipend table. Although there may be large swings in the currency exchange rate, it is important that this policy be applied consistently across the ICs. Note that if a fellow is retained at the NIH after the JSPS fellowship has ended, the fellow's stipend shall not be reduced in the third year.

This is a partnership-based program emphasizing input from both parties, but it is currently funded largely by the JSPS foundation. For its historic contribution to Japan's biomedical research, NIH was chosen by the foundation as a single, model case to be tried. For this reason, the fellowship is granted to the NIH as an organization, rather than to individual scientists, as fellowships are normally given. Over the years, NIH has helped Japan to advance an excellent research enterprise by training high-caliber scientists. NIH has enjoyed having a good supply of hardworking Japanese post-docs. While many fellows return to Japan after training, some have remained in NIH assuming advanced positions, such as Staff Scientists, making long-standing contributions. This program has been successful for both sides.

For more information: http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/research_grants/jsp/intramural.htm or contact Dr. Keiko Ozato, NICHD.