SP-CERN Career Enhancement Fellowship Program

Spastic Paraplegia Centers of Excellence Research Network (SP-CERN-RDCRC) Advanced Clinical Trial Training Program

Call for Applications – First Cycle (Start Date: July 1, 2026)

Program Overview: The Spastic Paraplegia Centers of Excellence Research Network (SP-CERN) - RDCRC, part of the NIH-funded Rare Diseases Clinical Research Network (RDCRN), invites applications for the SP-CERN Career Enhancement Fellowship Program. These competitive fellowships aim to train the next generation of clinician-scientists and clinical trialists in Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia (HSP) and related neurogenetic disorders.

Fellows will receive individualized, mentored training across SP-CERN's eleven academic centers, developing expertise in clinical research design, translational neuroscience, natural-history studies, and clinical-trial readiness for rare neurological diseases.

We invite applications for the **Advanced Clinical Trial Training Program**: This 12-month fellowship provides a stipend of $80,000 for salary support.

Eligibility

- M.D. or M.D./Ph.D. degree
- Clinically qualified applicants (completed residency in neurology, child neurology, genetics, physiatry, or developmental medicine). Applicants are typically post-residency, post-doctoral, or junior-faculty level.
- U.S. and international candidates are eligible. ECFMG certification is not required as this fellowship is primarily focused on research.
- Applicants must demonstrate a long-term career commitment to HSP, neurogenetics, and rare-disease research.
- Individuals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.

Program Highlights

- Individualized mentorship plan with primary and secondary mentors
- Exposure to pediatric and adult HSP clinical care, outcome measures, biomarkers, and trial design
- Integration with SP-CERN's ongoing natural-history and clinical-trial platforms
- Access to formal coursework through Harvard Catalyst, BCH Biostatistics and Research Design (BARD), University of Miami Genomics, and other RDCRN resources
- Participation in the RDCRN R25 Scholars Program, monthly SP-CERN calls, and Virtual Grand Rounds

- Presentation opportunities at national and international meetings
- Optional rotation in laboratory or translational research settings (iPSC models, gene therapy, disease mechanisms)
- Structured career-development and grant-writing support

Program Leadership and Mentorship

The Career Enhancement Core (CEC) is directed by Michael E. Shy, MD (University of Iowa), with co-directors Darius Ebrahimi-Fakhari, MD, PhD (Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School) and Stephan Züchner, MD, PhD (University of Miami).

Training takes place across SP-CERN hubs (Boston Children's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, University of Miami, University of Michigan, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, University of Iowa, Texas Children's Hospital, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Scottish Rite for Children, Seattle Children's, University of Washington) to match each fellow's background and career goals.

Application Requirements

Applicants should identify a primary mentor (site investigator at one of the SP-CERN sites) and submit:

1. Cover letter and 1-page personal statement describing motivation, career goals, and alignment with SP-CERN.
2. Curriculum Vitae and list of publications.
3. Two letters of recommendation, including one from the current program director or department chair.

Timeline

- Application deadline: February 1, 2026
- Decision notification: March 1, 2026
- Fellowship start: July 1, 2026
- Fellowship duration: 12 months

Contact Information

Application submission: Please submit your application in a single PDF to: *spcern@childrens.harvard.edu*

Inquiries: Dr. Michael E. Shy, Director, Career Enhancement Core (CEC), University of Iowa; *michael-shy@uiowa.edu*

About SP-CERN

The Spastic Paraplegia Centers of Excellence Research Network (SP-CERN) - RDCRC is a multi-institutional NIH RDCRN consortium dedicated to advancing translational research and therapy development for hereditary spastic paraplegia and related neurogenetic disorders. SP-CERN unites 11 academic centers across the U.S. and international collaborators to accelerate diagnosis, natural-history research, biomarker discovery, and clinical-trial readiness.