

Nature Research and Yakult to support human microbiota research

A growing body of evidence has emerged in the last decade supporting the major role the human microbiota plays in health and disease. To encourage the development of this promising field, Nature Research and Yakult have launched a new, multi-year competitive grant programme for research into the human microbiota.

The Global Grants for Gut Health will consider proposals for research projects — whether laboratory investigations or clinical studies — that advance understanding of the impact of the gut microbiota on human health.

Dean Sanderson, Managing Director of Nature Research, said: "We are delighted to launch this global programme in partnership with Yakult. As competition for finite resources increases, we know that researchers — particularly early-career researchers — face challenges in securing funding for their work. We hope that these grants can play a role in addressing these needs. The human microbiota and its connection to our health is a rapidly-growing research area — we're excited to support this community, and look forward to their future discoveries."

Hiroshi Narita, Senior Managing Executive Officer of Yakult Honsha, said: "The microbiome's connection with a wide variety of diseases has been widely reported in recent years. In order to facilitate further progress in the field of microbiota and probiotics research, we are launching this research grant programme with Nature Research, and have high expectations for its success. We believe that the project will contribute towards improved health and happiness of people around the world through deepening our understanding of the influence of microbiota on human health."

Applications for the first round of funding will open in August 2018. Funding is available to researchers from across the world. Three awards of up to US\$100,000 per funding cycle will be made. Research projects will run for one year.

Applicants shall be employed by a university, research institute or any other not-for-profit organisation. Applicants must hold a professional or research degree (e.g. PhD, MD, PharmD) and have at least 5 years' postdoctoral research experience.

Applications can relate to:

- the structure, function and diversity of the human microbiome
- the gut-associated immune system and the microbiota's immunomodulatory capacity
- the role of the gut microbiota and nutrition in inflammatory and metabolic diseases, such as obesity, inflammatory bowel disease and irritable bowel syndrome
- the role of the microbiota in the gut-brain axis
- the modulation of the gut microbiota.

Applications will be assessed by an independent panel of internationally renowned researchers in human microbiota, recommended by Nature Research editors based on their knowledge and experience in this research field. The expert panel will assess proposals based on criteria including originality, importance, scientific quality, value for money and quality of the applicant or team. Nature Research and Yakult will have no influence over the decision-making.

Notes to editors:

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About Yakult Honsha Co., Ltd.

Yakult is a leading Japanese company focused on the development and marketing of foods, beverages, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. For over 80 years Yakult has explored the possibilities of probiotics.

Yakult has continued to develop its business based on the philosophy of contributing to the health and happiness of people around the world through pursuit of excellence in life science in general and our research and experience in microorganisms in particular. Yakult now operates in 38 countries and regions around the world, including Japan, with over 39 million of the company's dairy products consumed each day.

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