ISOM Pichichero Family Foundation Innovation Research Grant in Otitis Media

Call for Proposals - 2026

Purpose

The International Society of Otitis Media (ISOM) Pichichero Family Foundation Innovation Research Grant supports innovative medical research focused on **otitis media**. This program aims to advance knowledge through basic science and/or clinical research while encouraging new investigators to enter the field.

About ISOM

The International Society of Otitis Media (ISOM) is dedicated to advancing knowledge and improving care for patients with otitis media worldwide. Through research funding, education, and scientific exchange, ISOM supports the global community of clinicians and scientists working to understand and treat middle ear disease.

Eligibility

- **Primary Applicants:** All ISOM members in good standing. If not a member yet, please join us. See the details below.
- **Principal Investigator:** Must be an ISOM member.
- **Collaborations:** Multi-institutional collaborations are encouraged; collaborators need not be ISOM members, but are welcome to join ISOM.
- **Special Encouragement:** We particularly encourage applications from:
  - Early career researchers and trainees
  - New faculty members (e.g., Instructor or Assistant Professor level or equivalent, with no major sources of research funding)
  - Investigators from related disciplines entering otitis media research (e.g., immunology, microbiology, infectious diseases, primary care, pediatrics, audiology/communication sciences, adult/pediatric otology, public health/global

health, epidemiology, biomedical engineering, pharmacology, auditory physiology, craniofacial biology, etc.)

Award Details

- **Number of Awards:** 2 awards for the 2026 funding cycle (one for basic science and one for clinical research if sufficient high-quality proposals from both areas are submitted)
- **Amount:** Up to $20,000 per award for salary support of the recipient, after allowing 7.5% for indirect costs of the institution.
- Start date: September 1, 2026 (latest)
- **Duration:** up to 12 months from project start date
- **Extension:** One 12-month no-cost extension may be requested, if needed, at no cost

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Important Dates

- **Application Deadline:** May 15, 2026, 11:59 PM (time zone ET)
- **No deadline extensions will be granted**
- **Award Notification:** By June 30, 2026

Application Components and Page Limits

Applications must include the following sections in a **single PDF document**:

1. Cover Sheet (1 page)

Must include signatures from both Principal Investigator and Institutional Signatory before submission.

Required Information:

- Project title
- Principal Investigator details (name, academic title, institutional affiliation, department, phone, email)
- Project period (start and end dates)
- Indication if new proposal or resubmission, including explanation in case of resubmission
- Total funds requested
- Key personnel with roles
- Human subjects involvement (Yes/No, IRB protocol number if applicable)
- Animal subjects involvement (Yes/No, IACUC protocol number if applicable)

2. Main Research Proposal (Maximum 4 A4 pages)

Formatting Requirements:

- Font: 11-point Arial
- Margins: ½ inch on all sides
- Single spacing

Required Sections with Suggested Allocation:

A. Introduction and Significance (maximum 1 page)

- Define the health importance of the project
- Establish relevance to otitis media research and ISOM mission
- Review current state of knowledge
- Identify knowledge gaps your research will address

B. Study Objectives, Hypotheses & Specific Aims (maximum ½ page)

- Clearly state research objectives
- Present testable hypotheses
- List 2-3 specific aims with measurable outcomes

C. Innovation (maximum ½ page)

- Define what is novel about the project
- Explain how your approach differs from existing methods/research
- Describe potential to advance the field

D. Preliminary Data (1-2 paragraphs)

- Present proof of concept or feasibility data
- While not required, preliminary data strengthens applications

E. Research Strategy and Approach (maximum 1½ pages): Provide a step-by-step experimental plan, including:

- Detailed methodology for each specific aim
- What is being tested and how
- Control groups and comparison conditions (if applicable)
- Sample size with statistical justification
- Data collection procedures
- Statistical analysis plan

- Ethical considerations (for human subjects research) or animal welfare considerations (for vertebrate animals research)
- Timeline and milestones of activities
- Expected results and alternative outcomes
- Potential limitations and mitigation strategies

Note: Statistical rigor is essential. Appropriate statistics must be employed, and power analyses to justify subject numbers and expected effect sizes.

F. Anticipated Research Outcomes (1 paragraph)

- What evidence will this project generate?
- How will results address specific medical care questions?
- Potential for translation to clinical practice or future research
- Dissemination of activities
- Expected deliverables (publications, presentations, datasets)
- How with this study help attract larger funding applications? Please identify future funding strategies if relevant (i.e., NIH, NHMRC, NIHR, etc.)

3. Team Capability and Feasibility (Maximum 1 page)

A. Expertise and Experience

- Demonstrate PI and key personnel's qualifications
- Highlight relevant prior productivity
- Note: Applications from investigators without major grant support will be viewed favorably

B. Facilities, Environment and Resources

- Describe institutional support and resources
- Detail equipment and facilities available
- Explain access to study populations (if applicable)
- Confirm feasibility within a 12-month timeframe

C. Consumer/Patient Involvement

- Describe engagement with patients, families, or community stakeholders
- Explain how consumer input shaped research design or will guide translation
- Note: lack of consumer/patient involvement must be justified

4. Budget and Justification (Maximum 1 page)

Budget Table - Include:

- Personnel (names, roles)
    - Principal Investigator (maximum salary based on current US NIH cap)
    - Research nurses, technicians, coordinators
- Materials and supplies
- Subject stipends (if applicable)
- Equipment >$1,000 (requires detailed justification)
- Other direct costs

Restrictions:

- No travel expenses allowed
- No computer purchases allowed
- Total project costs: $20,000 maximum for salary support, after allowing 7.5% for indirect costs

Budget Justification - Provide a brief rationale for each budget item.

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5. Timeline Chart (Maximum 1 page)

Provide a detailed month-by-month chart showing all major activities and deliverables.

Example Format:

Tasks	Month 1-3	Month 4-6	Month 7-9	Month 10-12
IRB/IACUC approval & setup	●			
Participant recruitment	●	●	●	
Data collection		●	●	●
Laboratory experiments		●	●	
Data analysis			●	●
Manuscript preparation				●

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6. References (No page limit)

Use standard citation format.

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7. Biosketches (2 pages maximum per person)

Required for PI and all key personnel. Submit in Word or PDF format.

Include:

- Education and training
- Positions and honors
- Publications
- Scientific contributions
- Research support (current and pending)
- Top 5 publications in the previous 5 years with justification of why selected. Selected peer-reviewed publications (emphasize expertise and otitis media research if applicable)
- Career disruption (if relevant)

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8. Appendices (as needed)

Only the following materials are permitted:

- Blank patient information sheet and informed consent/assent forms
- Blank surveys, questionnaires, or data collection instruments
- Letters of support (if applicable)

Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Applications will be evaluated by 2-3 expert peer reviewers from ISOM or recruited by ISOM using the following criteria:

Core Review Criteria (Each item scored 1-9, with lower scores indicating higher quality)

1. **Significance/Innovation (50%)** - Does the project address an important problem in otitis media and human health? How novel is the research approach or methodology?
2. **Approach (30%)** - Is the scientific rationale sound? Is the design feasible with the likelihood of success?
3. **Investigator/Team Capability (15%)** - Do the PI and key personnel have appropriate expertise and experience to accomplish the work in the timeframe?
4. **Deliverable Outcomes (15%)** - What is the potential contribution to the basic science of otitis media and/or evidence-based medical care?

Overall Impact Score (1-9 scale with lower scores indicating higher quality)

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score reflecting the likelihood that the project will exert a powerful influence on otitis media research.

Impact is determined by:

- **Importance** (Significance + Innovation)
- **Likelihood of Success** (Approach + Investigator + Deliverable Outcomes)

Scoring Scale:

Score	Descriptor	Impact Level	Description
1	Exceptional	High	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2	Outstanding	High	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3	Excellent	High	Very strong with only minor weaknesses
4	Very Good	Moderate	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Moderate	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6	Satisfactory	Moderate	Some strengths, but also some moderate weaknesses
7	Fair	Low	Some strengths, but with at least one major weakness
8	Marginal	Low	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9	Poor	Low	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Funding Threshold: Applications with an average overall impact score of **3.0 or lower** are potentially fundable.

Weakness Definitions:

- **Minor:** Easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen project impact
- **Moderate:** Weakness that lessens project impact
- **Major:** Weakness that severely limits project impact

Special Requirements

Human Subjects Research

If your project involves human subjects:

- Evidence of Formal IRB approval or waiver is **required before funds are released**
- Submit IRB approval or waiver letter to: Tal Marom, Chair, ISOM Research Committee (talmarom73@gmail.com)

Vertebrate Animals Research

If your project involves vertebrate animals:

- Evidence of IACUC approval is **required before funds are released**
- Submit IACUC approval letter to: Tal Marom, Chair, ISOM Research Committee (talmarom73@gmail.com)

Reporting Requirements

1. **Interim Report:** Required if requesting a no-cost extension
2. **Final Report:** Due within 60 days of project end date, including:
   - Scientific progress summary
   - Financial accounting
   - Publications/presentations resulting from the award
   - Future directions

Acknowledgment

All publications, presentations, and materials resulting from this award must include the following acknowledgment:

"Supported in part by a grant from the International Society of Otitis Media provided by the Pichichero Family Foundation."

Application Submission

Submit the complete application package as a single PDF to:

Tal Marom, MD
Chair, ISOM Research Committee
Email: talmarom73@gmail.com

Package must include:

1. Complete proposal (all 9 sections)
2. Signed cover sheet (both PI and institutional signatures)
3. Separate biosketches for PI and key personnel (single PDF or Word document)

Deadline: March 15, 2026, 11:59 PM ET

Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted.
Requests for deadline extensions will not be considered.

Questions?

For questions about eligibility, application requirements, or the review process, please contact:

Tal Marom, MD
Chair, ISOM Research Committee
Email: talmarom73@gmail.com

Please submit questions at least 5 business days before the deadline to allow adequate time for a response.