

**2026
Johnson & Johnson Early Career
Innovator Award focused on
inflammatory skin disorders**

Applicant Instructions

August 2025

Contact Information:

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Introduction

The Dermatology Foundation (DF) is pleased to offer a research award made possible by a generous \$1,000,000 contribution from Johnson & Johnson, which will fund **“The 2026 Johnson & Johnson Early Career Innovator Award focused on inflammatory skin disorders.”**

This new award will significantly enhance the research for early-career investigators studying inflammatory skin disorders. The Johnson & Johnson Early Career Innovator Award aims to support the research of an outstanding early career investigator who is developing a track record of excellence in basic, clinical, or translational science. The funded projects are expected to produce innovative findings that deepen our understanding of dermatological issues associated with inflammatory skin conditions.

Designed to support the research of exceptional early-career investigators, it is expected that Johnson & Johnson early-career innovator applicants actively pursue NIH funding to advance their research and academic careers in dermatology.

About the Dermatology Foundation

The purpose of the Dermatology Foundation is simple but powerful. For sixty years, the Dermatology Foundation has identified and supported the early career work of investigators with great potential. Our research awards have helped launch outstanding research and academic careers, contributing significantly to the development of dermatology as we know it today. To date, the Foundation has awarded more than 2,500 research awards to enable advancements in patient care by providing nearly \$91 M in funding for discovery to talented investigators. The Dermatology Foundation has a proven track record of funding novel ideas and talented individuals who are dedicated to expanding our understanding of dermatologic conditions and diseases.

Award Details

a. Description

The Johnson & Johnson Early Career Innovator Award aims to help outstanding investigators **with prior DF CDA funding** to enhance their ability to compete for RO1 awards. Funded projects are expected to yield new insights that enhance our understanding of dermatological issues associated with inflammatory skin disorders. The research will focus on advancing knowledge of inflammatory skin disorders. Proposals should be hypothesis-driven and span a period of three years.

b. Amount and Effective Date

The Johnson & Johnson Award offers \$100,000 annually for up to three years. Award funds can be used for salary, benefits, and project expenses that support a meritorious project. Indirect costs are not covered. Funding for the first year begins on July 1, 2026.

c. Award Eligibility Requirements

This award is designed to support outstanding early-career investigators committed to advancing our understanding of inflammatory skin disorders. The specific eligibility requirements are as follows:

1. Early-Career Investigator within 5 years of initial appointment as an Assistant Professor as of January 1, 2026
2. Faculty appointment in an accredited dermatology department/division
3. Primary appointment in the dermatology department
4. M.D.; M.D., Ph.D. degree
5. The proposed project must address a dermatological issue associated with inflammatory skin disorders
6. Research aims must be unique to the award
7. Strong demonstrated commitment to research
8. Appropriate training and experience in relevant research
9. Must have completed a minimum of 1 year of a DF CDA or similar grant funding at the time of application or returned a DF CDA due to being the recipient of federal funding.

Recipients may concurrently hold federally funded awards or their equivalent (e.g., NIH, VA, DOD, FDA, Doris Duke, Burroughs Wellcome, etc.). However, applicants may not have or be on a second RO1.

If awarded, the recipient may not retain other DF support at the time of funding.

d. General Eligibility Requirements

The **Johnson & Johnson Early Career Innovator Award** is subject to the Dermatology Foundation's general eligibility requirements for its Research Award Program, which must be met at the time of funding (i.e., July 1, 2026). As a result, the research funded by this award must be conducted in the U.S. under the sponsorship of a division or department of dermatology that has an ACGME-approved dermatology residency program. A project involving human subjects must have IRB approval at the time funding commences and throughout the term of the award. Award funds may not be used for indirect expenses. A project to be performed as part of the U.S. government research program (except Veterans Administration) or to be performed at a private foundation without an academic affiliation to dermatology is not eligible for funding.

The DF reserves the right to consider and fund an application in an award category that differs from the applicant's original submission.

Application Deadline

Applications for the **2026 Johnson & Johnson Early Career Innovator Award** will be accepted by the Dermatology Foundation beginning **September 15** through **December 1, 2025**. Please note that the submission procedure requires applicants to submit their application via the [DF Mid-Career Research Award Portal](#).

e. Additional Considerations

There is no limit to the number of award applications that may be submitted per institution.

f. Selection Process

The DF will select each of the award recipients according to a well-defined evaluation process based on the National Institutes of Health procedures for research grants. The collaborative review process will identify worthy applicants—talented researchers with the ideas, thought leadership, and experience needed to move scientific fields forward and promote advancements in patient care. An application for renewal of the award is required for years two and three, and approval will be based on a review of progress to date.

Application Instructions

To apply for the **2026 Johnson & Johnson Early Career Innovator Award**, you will need to assemble the following items, as directed in the following table:

- a. NIH bio-sketch (including funding section)
- b. Research proposal
- c. Budget
- d. Letter of support from the dermatology chair/chief
- e. Short and long layperson's description of research project
- f. A headshot picture (color)
- g. Research proposal figures – *Optional*

Application Instructions (cont.)

All components of your application package must be submitted through the DF Mid-Career Research Award Portal no later than **December 1st, 2025, at 11:59 PM CST**. All required documents below must be uploaded in individual PDFs. Receipt of your application will be confirmed via email.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Description and Requirements</i>
a. NIH bio-sketch	Provide your current NIH bio-sketch. Be sure to limit the number of pages to 5. Also, <u>be sure to disclose prior, current, and pending research support</u> (aims must not overlap with those proposed in the application).
b. Research proposal	Provide up to a two-page description of your proposed research project. Your proposal must include the title of the project, specific aims, background and preliminary data, experimental design and methods, projected results and significance, and references/literature cited. Font size must be at least 12 pt. with no more than 15 characters per inch and no more than six lines within a vertical inch. Citations may be in a smaller font size. Leave one-inch margins on all sides. Do not append any additional material.
c. Detailed budget	Provide a one-page, three-year budget that identifies how award funds will be used. Provide appropriate justification for each line item. The DF employs the NIH definition of direct costs; please be sure no indirect costs are included in your budget.
d. Letter of support from dermatology chair/chief	Provide a letter of support from your chair on your institution's letterhead. The letter must certify that 75% of your time is devoted to research, and it should identify departmental commitments/resources that have been dedicated to support you (e.g., space, protected time, development funds, and technical support). Additional comments relevant to the review of your application (e.g., institutional or special resources, patient registries, and other relevant information) are encouraged. The letter can be up to two pages .
e. Short and long lay description of research project (separate PDFs)	Provide two descriptions of your research proposal in lay terms for use in the DF's printed award announcements. The short version should be limited to 100 words. The long version should be limited to one page . Margins may be no smaller than 1" and a 12-pt. Font must be used.
f. Color headshot (in jpg please)	Provide a file containing a photo of you dressed professionally. Vertical orientation is required. The file must be at least 150 DPI at 8x10.
g. Research Proposal Figures (optional)	For greater clarity, please provide a file containing only the images and figures from your research proposal . <u>Do not</u> include additional information/ figures.

Questions regarding the application process? Please contact the DF office at 847-328-2256 (8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central Time) or DFRAP@dermatologyfoundation.org.