



SSPH+



SWISS SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH

A FOUNDATION OF SWISS UNIVERSITIES

# BREATHLESS ON TRACK

Online Faculty Meeting 2021  
Tue 15 & Wed 16 June on Zoom

## This is Session F3 Wed 16.6.2021 - 13:00-14:00h

13:00-14:00	<b>Win a PhD fellowship with your top candidate: Guidance for MD-PhD fellowships</b> ⓘ	Audience: SSPH+ Faculty and all others who supervise PhD students (at SSPH+ partner institutions) will follow Chair/Moderator: Nino Künzli Guest: Alain Amstutz, MD-PhD Fellowship holder
14:00-14:15	VIRTUAL COFFEE BREAK - 15'	

<https://swisstph.zoom.us/j/84694890222?pwd=RIYxbkFFM3NaSVE0TWszWTFadGloQT09>

Meeting ID: 846 9489 0222    Passcode: 277424

## MD-PhD track as of today

- It is a «normal» PhD track, i.e. a full 3+ years FTE research period leading to a «PhD» (or some similar title), regulated under the same rules by the local universities like any other PhD, BUT with 2 specificities:
  - A Master in Medicine (incl veterinary or dentistry) is required for the track
  - If properly planned in advance: Based on an additional regulation (usually under the responsibility of the medical faculty), the MD-PhD track leads directly to the double-title «MD-PhD» (usually the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 3+ PhD publications qualifies for the MD, and the package of all 3+ publications leads to the PhD → the «MD-PhD» can be achieved in only 3+ instead of 4+ years, i.e. the traditional career of 1) write a MD-thesis (usually up to 1 year) and 2) later on do a separate PhD.
- → **ATTRACTIVE CAREER PLAN** for research oriented Master in Med students is to do immediately the «combined package»
- Particularly attractive for those with a Master in Med / Vet who **want to specialize in PUBLIC HEALTH** – because as of 2020, the PhD (or MD-PhD) qualifies as «MPH-equivalent» (with a few extra conditions) – thus, the expensive MPH investment is not a requirement anymore in those career plans

- Thus, a 3+ years MD-PhD track is extremely attractive for the next generation of academic public health (medical/dental/veterinary) scientists in Switzerland
- All you need to foster such careers of the best talents are FELLOWSHIPS !

**Given this most attractive track for public health oriented research talents with a Master in Med, Dent or Vet... one expects many candidates to compete for the most prestigious MD-PhD-FELLOWSHIPS Switzerland offers...**

## **HOWEVER...**

Once a year SNSF / Cancer Ligue /SAMS grants 10-14 fully funded prestigious 3-years MD-PhD Fellowships – **BUT MD-PhD Candidates with public health science orientation / supervised by SSPH+ Faculty are almost non-existent, year after year after year...**

**POLL 1: How many candidates have you promoted so far to submit to this fellowship program?**

**POLL 2: Why do SSPH+ researchers almost NEVER promote candidates for this?**

# History of the Swiss National MD-PhD Fellowship Program

- Joint initiative of SNSF and SAMS in 1992 with support of private foundations, first MD-PhD program in Europe, based on US MD-PhD training for dual academic-clinical career
- Originally: secondary curriculum in natural sciences for physicians and competitive, national fellowships for excellent MD-PhD students
- Supported the development of structured MD-PhD tracks at universities

## Evolution to current MD-PhD National Grants Program

**NOTE: «MD-PhD track» is not a separate «structured PhD Program» as meanwhile developed in most universities («Bologna» process) which did not exist in 1992. The «Grants Program» is – in today's terminology – just a «competitive funding mechanism» for MD-PhD fellowships.**

- Doctoral curricula and structured doctoral schools set up in universities (for PhD in general, no specific «MD-PhD Doctorate Programs»)
- New (general PhD) doctoral programs in clinical science /patient-oriented clinical or population oriented public health research, e.g. in BE, BS and ZH (as part of usual PhD Programs)
- definition of ECTS credits and content of doctoral curricula in the competence of universities, not funders (defined in general PhD programs and/or graduate school regulations of the local universities (not SAMS/SNSF))

### **SPECIFIC evolution of the National Grants Program**

- revision of MD-PhD National Grants Program regulations in 2017
- clarified role of partners (local committees, national committee, SAMS, SNSF, funders)
- harmonized participation requirements and evaluation criteria; public health sciences qualify explicitly too
- grants (salary, no «lump sum» fellowship anymore)

## National MD-PhD Grants Program in a nutshell

- Individual grants
- Target audience: young physicians (also VetMD and DentMD) stemming from CH system, enrolled in local MD-PhD program, doing a dissertation in natural sciences, public health sciences, clinical research or biomedical ethics
- Min. 80% dedicated to dissertation, up to 20% clinics/services
- av. CHF 65'000.–/year, 2 to max. 3 years (salary only, no research costs)
- Commitment from host group to pay 4th year
- 1 call per year
- Budget: 10 – 14 grants/call (= CHF 1.6 – 2.1 mio/call)
- Funders: SNSF, KFS (Cancer ligue), SAMS

# How it works

## Your selection

- Identify talents you would like to supervise
- Clarify the topic of the MD/PhD research together.
- NOTE: this is a PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP – career goals (with high potential) of promising YOUNG SCIENTIST matter a lot – it is not about «your research». The candidate must be really interested in a research career
- Ideal candidates might be those who did (highly successful) Master thesis with you... OR even just start to do an MD with you...

## Important eligibility criteria

- Candidates just finished medical school (or no longer than 3 years prior to submission deadline).
- Must have been residents of Switzerland for at least 2 years by the submission deadline.

## Two-stage process

- Stage 1: LOCAL: by 15.12. apply to LOCAL MD PhD Committee for pre-selection of dossier – ONE CAN ONLY APPLY if approved by «local committee». This may need clarification for those with new Master in Med programs (Uni FR; USI) – so far applications came only from Uni BE, BS, LAUS, GE and ZH. Check out with local committee how the procedures are!
- Stage 2: NATIONAL: Submit by 15.3. (usually) the final proposal to SAMW
- Until early May: National MD PhD Committee evaluates all proposals → presentation & interview of each candidate to the commission (15min slot per candidate) → final decision proposal of Commission goes to funders for final decision to candidates: July – earliest start of MD PhD: September



## Application documents

- Application package can be obtained online at SAMW  
(NOTE: It might change a bit – look for the NEWEST one every year)  
<https://www.samw.ch/en/Funding/MD-PhD-Program.html>
- Project summary (1 page max) Detailed research plan (max. 6 pages, incl. tables and figures but without references incl. current state of research, hypotheses, aims, relevance of proposed research, role of applicant in the project, methodology, planned experiments, milestones, pitfalls and timetable.
- **COORDINATOR at SAMS / SAMW / ASSM:** Myriam Tapernoux, PhD , Académie Suisse des Sciences Médicales (ASSM) Maison des Académies , Laupenstrasse 7 , CH-3001 Berne : Tél. +41 31 306 92 76 , [m.tapernoux@samw.ch](mailto:m.tapernoux@samw.ch)

# What matters in the evaluation...

## 1. Person

Applicant's qualification and examination scores during medical studies, scientific knowledge and demonstrated interest for research

## 2. Project

Quality, originality, scientific relevance, feasibility, likelihood of the PhD project to be successfully completed

## 3. Environment

Scientific quality of the research institution and of the host lab, scientific and personal support offered by the PhD supervisor, contribution to research costs

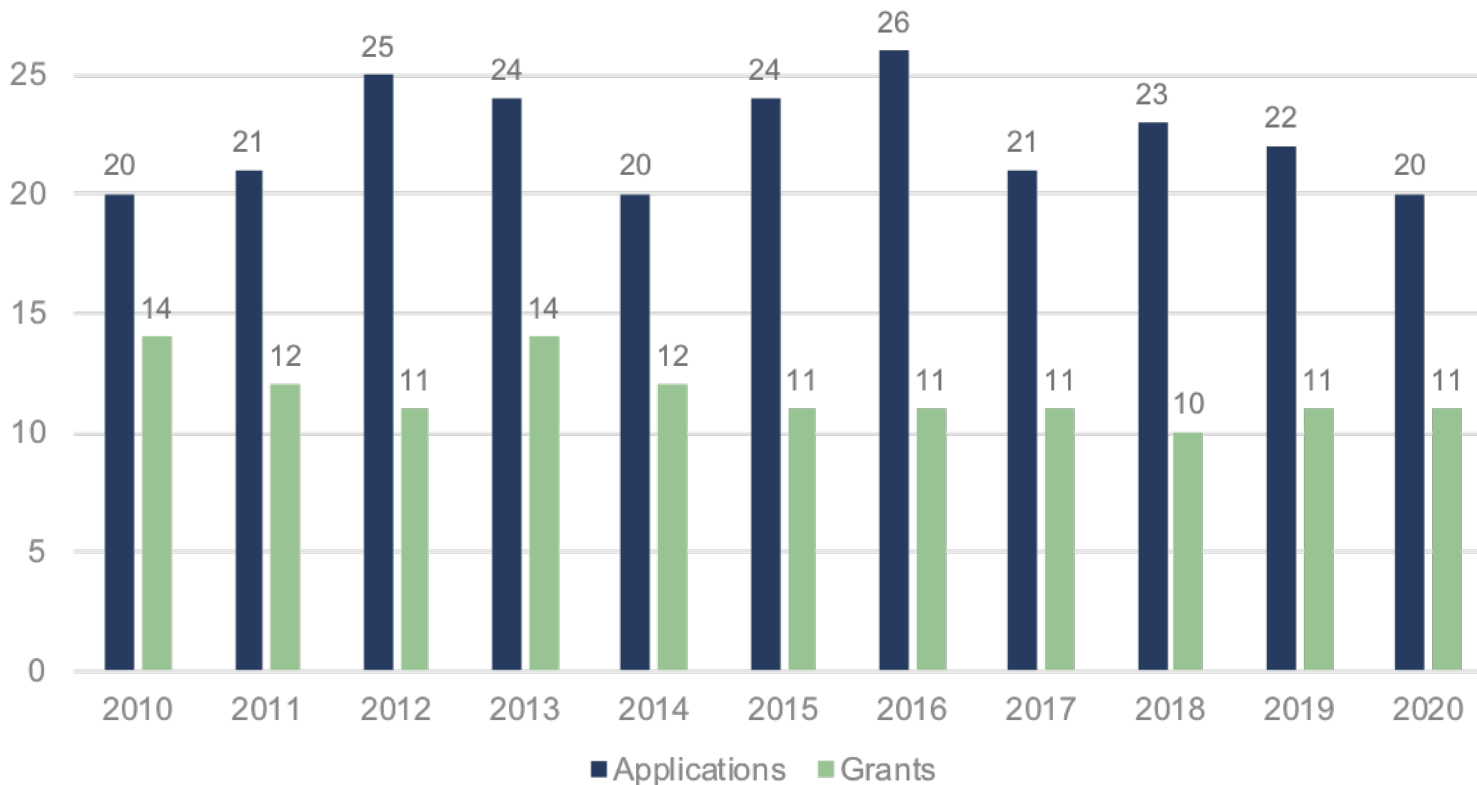
## 4. Chances of Success

Applicant's aptitude for an academic-clinical career, career plan

There is competition... but far less than at later career stages...!

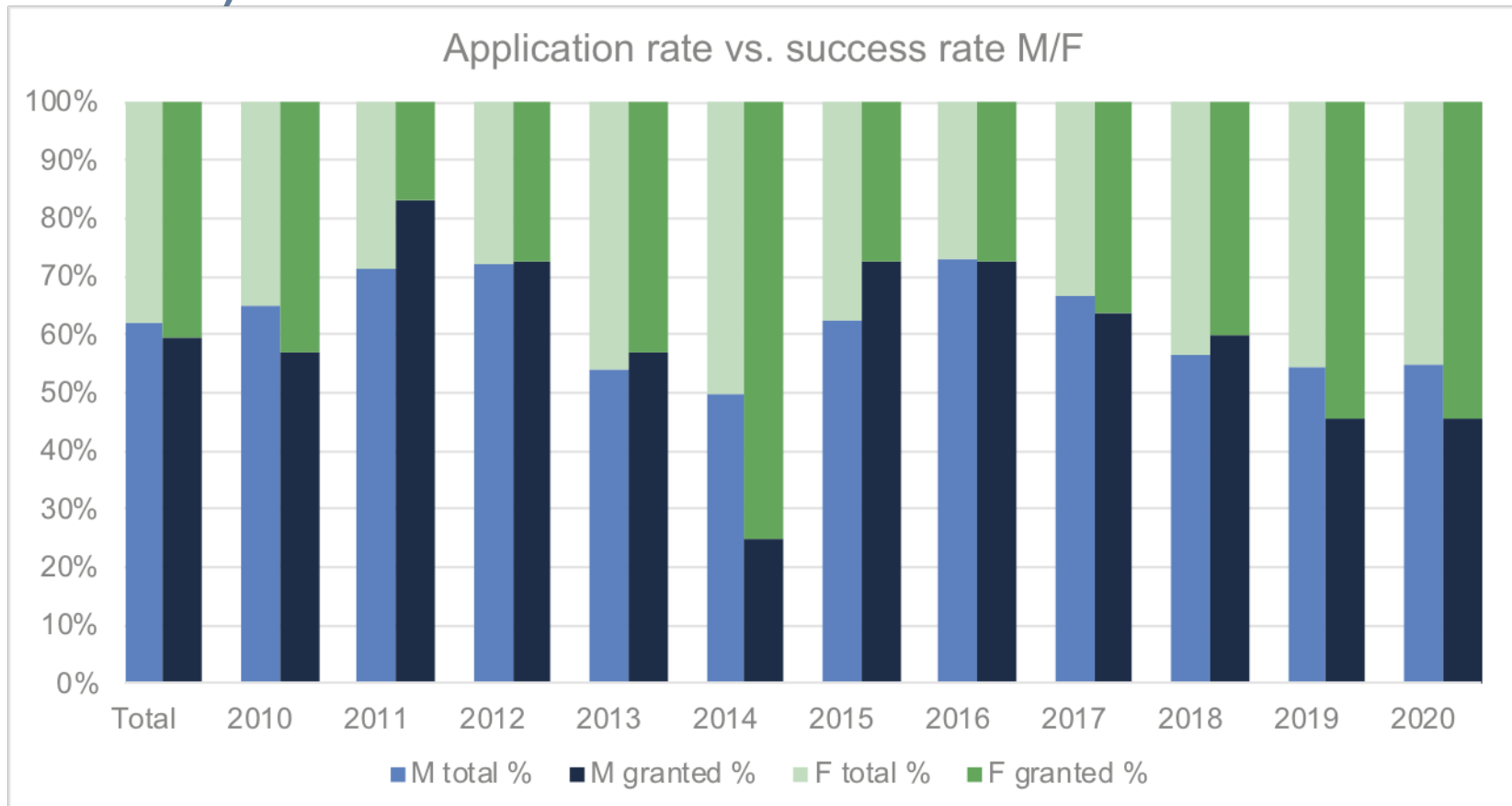
**Pre-selected (nationally submitted) applications and awarded grants (2010-2020)**

PS: ... (well done) cancer-oriented proposals (of excellent candidates) might have higher success rates...!





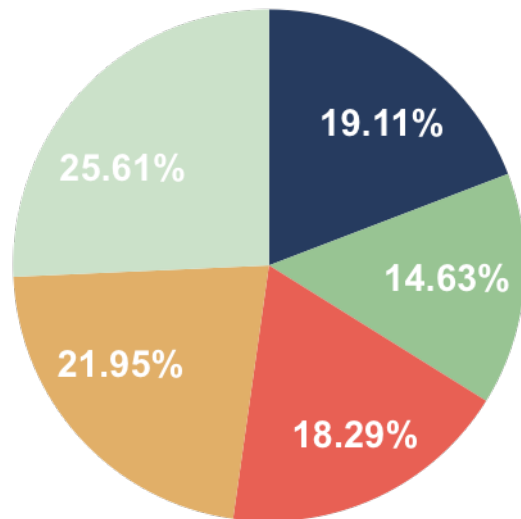
## Success rate male/female applicants similar, on average (2010-2020)



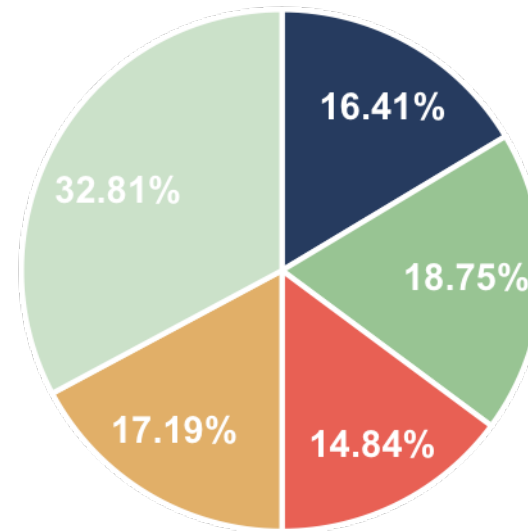
## Success rates by University ZH/BS above average – the others below...

Distribution of applications and grants in CH (2010-2020)

Pre-selected applications



Grants



# Introducing a «rare species»: a public health oriented clinical scientist holding an SNSF MD-PhD Fellowship

## WELCOME

**Alain Amstutz, Swiss TPH**

**Supervisor:**

Prof. Niklaus Labhardt

Proposal awarded in 2017:

“Supporting Lesotho on the way towards the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets: Operational and clinical research addressing HIV/AIDS care in resource-limited settings”



# Summary of Discussion & Suggestions

**Main question is... how to recruit good candidates?**

- **TIMING MATTERS**

- Start early – optimal: those who do the Master thesis with you → may ask for MD-thesis → may be MD / PhD...
- Run a call tailored to interested candidates soon finishing medical studies... (but this might be too late)

- **ATTRACTIVE POSITIONS MATTER:**

- Some combination with clinical work is often important → can you provide some partly clinical environment? Team up with clinical partners?
- ETH has the medical bachelor program; end of 2<sup>nd</sup> yr students must do an internship anywhere – take some of those up (promising research oriented background as they get more research competencies in the bachelor (see next slide)
- Accommodate your offers to the career struggles of physicians (needs for specialization trainings etc.)

- **FORMALITIES MATTER:**

- Clarify the local organization of the MD/PhD commission in your university to not miss the local procedures (as they are not identical)
- May be procedures target lab based MD/PhD tracks rather than population oriented health sciences → change it
- Coach your candidate well to be well prepared

If SSPH+ can help for public health science oriented candidates, approach us any time. Alain Amstutz can also be approached to share experience, hints and kinks. For formal questions about the call: see above slide with email (Myriam Tapernoux @ SAMS)

# Bachelor in Human Medicine

## Guidelines for Translational Research Internship

Version 1.0 Juni 2019

### 1 General Information

#### 1.1 Overview

Within the bachelor in „Human Medicine“ at ETH Zurich, the translational research internship is the final step before transferring into the master at a partner university.



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who supervise PhD students (at SSPH+  
partner institutions)

will follow

Chair/Moderator: Nino Künzli

Guest: Alain Amstutz, MD-PhD Fellowship holder

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