

# Novartis to fund five innovative ideas to support patients and the sickle cell community

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- - 2018 STEP Program™ designed to support unique proposals from nonprofit organizations that serve people living with sickle cell disease
- - Novartis will select proposals that demonstrate innovation in health education and support to improve the experience of patients and their families

EAST HANOVER, N.J., Nov. 14, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Novartis announced the launch of the 2018 STEP (Solutions to Empower Patients) Program™ to inspire solutions that support people living with sickle cell disease (SCD).

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The program will recognize and fund as many as five proposals of up to \$50,000 each that demonstrate innovation in health education, empowerment and support to help improve the experience of people living with SCD. In 2017, the first year of the initiative, the STEP Program provided funding to three organizations involved with metastatic breast cancer.

"People living with sickle cell disease face unique challenges," said Ameet Mallik, Executive Vice President and Head, US, Novartis Oncology. "By helping fund innovative programs developed by the organizations that best understand these challenges, we hope to make the biggest impact for those affected by this disease, where there continues to be a significant unmet need."

Sickle cell disease is a genetic blood disorder that causes ongoing damage to blood vessels and organs<sup>1</sup>. It is a lifelong illness that can place emotional, physical and financial burdens on patients and their families as they navigate issues dealing with work, school, family and finances. People with SCD often experience recurrent episodes of acute, severe pain (called vaso-occlusive crises) which can eventually become chronic<sup>2</sup>. These crises are the main reason why patients go to the hospital and are linked to poor health outcomes and early death<sup>3</sup>.

Application Details for Interested Health Care or Health Care-Related Nonprofit Organizations

Any US-based, 501(c)(3) organization that supports people impacted by SCD is welcome to submit a STEP Program proposal for consideration. Suggested proposals should focus on at least one of the following:

- Empowering SCD patients to advocate for themselves
- Providing resources, programs or tools that help SCD patients better interact with health care providers (HCPs) and navigate the health care system
- Educating HCPs about SCD management and patient needs
- Providing innovative programs to ease the transition to adult care
- Providing training programs for HCPs and raising awareness of implicit and institutional biases

Proposals will be evaluated by an external review committee consisting of experts in a variety of fields. The

committee will review the applications and evaluate and identify as many as five proposals on the basis of innovation and the potential to make the greatest positive impact on the SCD community.

Organizations that wish to apply for funding from the STEP Program should send their completed submission form to [STEP.Program@Novartis.com](mailto:STEP.Program@Novartis.com). All submissions must be received no later than December 21, 2018.

For more information about the STEP Program, please see the program backgrounder and submission FAQ.

#### About Novartis

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#### References

1. Roseff SD. Sickle cell disease: a review. *Immunohematology: Journal of Blood Group Serology and Education*. 2009(25):2:67-74.
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3. Puri L, Nottage KA, Hankins JS, et al. State of the art management of acute vaso-occlusive pain in sickle cell disease. *Paediatr Drugs*. 2018;20:29-42.

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