

Post-Graduate Neuro-Rehabilitation Research Training for Parkinson Disease (NRRT-PD) Request for Applications (RFA) for Italian Physician

The post-graduate Neuro-Rehabilitation Research Training program for **Italian Medical Doctors** is now open for applications. This one-year program is designed to support talented and motivated Italian citizens graduated from Medical School and currently participating in a four-year residency program in either Neurology or Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation seeking additional training in neuro-rehabilitation of Parkinson disease (PD) and other movement disorders. Successful candidates will benefit from state-of-the-art research facilities in the USA and Italian sites as well as from the extensive and thriving clinical-research community in New York and Italy.

We are now accepting applications. Successful applicants will receive awards until the annual budget is exhausted and will be able to start the Training either on or right after September 1, 2025. Successful applicants will participate in the international training program both in the United States at Northwell Health Glen Cove Hospital and in Italy within the Fresco Parkinson's Network at the Ospedale 'Moriggia-Pelascini' Gravedona ed Uniti and at the Casa di Cura Villa Margherita, Arcugnano, Vicenza. The training grant for a maximum duration of one year will support: salary integration, relocation, health insurance, support for housing in Italy and in USA, as well as participation to a scientific conference. The total award is up to \$30,000/year.

Pre-requisites for the application:

- Italian citizenship
- Medical Doctor degree
- Current enrollment in an Italian residency program in neurology or physical medicine and rehabilitation

Documentation to be submitted:

1. CV in English
2. A one-page cover letter including a summary of the candidate's:
 - History and commitment to clinical and/or research career
 - Potential to develop a successful career
 - Expectations about the training to be obtained with this program
3. The application must include two to four letters of references from previous or current mentors.
4. A copy of MD and other relevant degrees' certificate and clinical licensure(s)
5. Certificate of current enrolment in an Italian residency program in neurology or physical medicine and rehabilitation
6. Letter of support of the residency program Director
7. A one-page description of research interests.
8. Evidence of English language proficiency, as determined by one of the following:

- TOEFL score of at least 65 or IELTS score of at least 5.5
- Documentation from an academic institution or English language school
- If none of the above documents are available, English language proficiency will be determined during an interview conducted by the sponsor either in-person, by videoconferencing, or by telephone

All the application's documents must be addressed to:

Dr. Monica Norcini at: Monica.Norcini@frescoparkinsoninstitute.it and info@frescoparkinsoninstitute.it by **May 31, 2025, up to 11.59 pm Rome time** for training starting on September 1, 2025.

Applicants can suggest a preferred starting date. In any event, we reserve the right to discuss other mutually-acceptable alternative starting dates. For any questions in this regard, please contact Dr. Monica Norcini.

BACKGROUND

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative condition characterized by motor and non-motor manifestations. Pharmacotherapy can control, at least in part and only for some time, most of the symptoms but does not slow the progression of disease. Surgical interventions may not be available for many patients, including those in the advanced stages, with cognitive impairment or older age.

Over the past two decades, together with medical and surgical treatments, physical medicine and stage-appropriate multi-modal rehabilitative interventions have become essential pillars in the management of PD symptoms throughout the disease course and especially in the mid to advanced stages of the diseases. In these stages, it has been shown that comprehensive rehabilitative intervention with physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and cognitive rehabilitation can maintain and often improve function, allowing for extended independent or partially assisted life, thus delaying or avoiding institutionalization.

The need for such approaches is even more compelling, considering that the global prevalence of PD has doubled in the past 25 years and may rise further as the population ages. The projected future economic burden will pose challenges to the healthcare system at large, necessitating the development of more cost-effective care. A comprehensive care model was developed in Italy about fifteen years ago, with the creation of the first in-patient intense rehabilitation centers aimed at improving function in patients with PD and related movement disorders. Other such care models have then been developed in other European countries and in Israel. Among the Italian Centers that have pioneered this experience, there are two institutions in Italy, the Ospedale Moriggia-Pelascini in Gravedona and the Casa di Cura Villa Margherita in Vicenza, both part of the Fresco Parkinson's Network of Excellence recognized as such by the Parkinson's Foundation. In-patient programs in these centers are based on a comprehensive approach that includes multimodal rehabilitation and personalized pharmacological treatment. Analyses of the clinical outcomes have shown efficacy at all stages of the disease for both motor and non-motor symptoms. The sustained improvement of daily living activities has a significant impact on the quality of life of both patients and caregivers and has delayed or avoided placement in nursing home. For these reasons, this model has been endorsed by US and International Organizations, including the Parkinson's Foundation, and the American Academy of Neurology.

The creation and establishment of this in-patient program first occurred in European countries and Israel where national health care is available, and policies emphasize prevention and long-term cost-containment. A similar in-patient program, which includes medical optimization and rehabilitation, neuropsychology, dietary, social worker, art therapy, and caregivers support intervention, has been recently established in the US at Northwell Health at Glen Cove Hospital. This program received Joint Commission Certification in March 2023.

To make this type of approach available to larger populations of patients with PD and other movement disorders, it is essential to train and to inform medical personnel, especially the younger professionals and those still in training.

The newly established 'Post-Graduate Neuro-rehabilitation Research Training for Parkinson Disease' aims at fulfilling this gap by training physicians who intend to specialized in the comprehensive care of patients with PD and other movement disorders.

RATIONALE FOR CREATING THIS TRAINING PROGRAM

Despite the evidence described above, and the validation of the established model of intervention, there is little formal training for physicians in this multidisciplinary treatment approach for these patient populations. Additionally, physicians in training may have minimal exposure to integrative and comprehensive models of care for patients with PD and other movement disorders.

As two of the Fresco Parkinson's Network of Excellence in Italy (Ospedale 'Moriggia-Pelascini' Gravedona ed Uniti and Casa di Cura Villa Margherita, Arcugnano, Vicenza) and the Glen Cove Parkinson's Unit at Northwell Health are world leaders in neuro-rehabilitation for PD, we propose a training program to create specialists with expertise in Neuro-Rehabilitation for PD and movement disorders.

This program will merge expert medical management with advanced multimodal neuro-rehabilitation, while promoting a cultural and medical exchange between US and Italy with exposure to different national health systems. In summary, this program will provide physicians-in-training and young professionals with an opportunity to grow in many respects and expand their clinical skills with a significant benefit for patients with PD and other movement disorders.

TRAINING DESCRIPTION

The following staff will be responsible for the training program:

- Alessandro Di Rocco, M.D. - Glen Cove Hospital at Northwell Health
- Rubin Lyubov, MD - Glen Cove Hospital at Northwell Health
- Daniele Volpe, M.D. - Casa di Cura Villa Margherita, Arcugnano, Vicenza
- Margherita Canesi, M.D. - Ospedale 'Moriggia-Pelascini' Gravedona ed Uniti

Responsibilities of the Program Directors

- The program will provide a supportive work environment, office space, and resources for clinical and research training
- The director and faculty will provide appropriate supervision for all clinical and research activities
- The director will support the trainee in the successful completion of research project(s), and preparation for presentation/publication
- The director will provide timely evaluations to trainee.

Training Program

The training program will be articulated in two six-month periods, with one period in the US and the other in Italy as specified below. Total training duration will be one year.

US training: The selected candidate will spend six months at Northwell facilities under the supervision of attending neurologists. The training will be at the Glen Cove Hospital Parkinson's and Motor Disorders Unit at Northwell. Focus of the training will be on in-patient integrated management of all aspects of neuro-rehabilitation, including physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, cognitive rehabilitation, and other neuro-rehabilitative modalities, as well as medical and surgical optimization of treatment, procedural training such as botulinum toxin injections, management and programming of deep brain stimulation, and the complementary use of other non-invasive brain stimulations. The trainee will learn to work in a highly integrated management team and to use outcome scales, data outcome management, participating in quality enhancement programs and research projects.

Italian training: The trainee will spend three months at the Ospedale 'Moriggia-Pelascini' Gravedona ed Uniti on the Como Lake and three months at the Casa di Cura Villa Margherita, in Arcugnano. In both institutions, the trainee will be immersed in a comprehensive, multidisciplinary in- and out-patient rehabilitation program for PD and other movement disorders. The facilities employ a multidisciplinary model of care including neurology, physiatry, neuropsychology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, PD nursing, social worker as well as speech and language therapy. The trainee will also become familiar with the integrative programs offered at both facilities including art therapy, music therapy, dance therapy, Nordic walking, and hydrotherapy utilized for the treatment of PD and other movement disorders.

Monitoring of the trainee's performance: Formal evaluations will occur every six months following direct observations of the trainee and discussions with other teaching staff involved in the training. Evaluations of the trainee will focused on basic knowledge, patient management skills, understanding of research methodology and the academic process of writing for peer-reviewed journals, lecturing and teaching. Constructive performance feedback will be provided to the trainees. Evaluations will be reviewed by faculty and the trainee. A permanent record of the evaluation will be maintained and be accessible to the trainee and authorized personnel.