



AMERICAN HEAD AND NECK SOCIETY (AHNS)

AHNS PRESIDENTIAL AWARD: Integrating Emerging Technologies for Head and Neck Cancer Translational Clinical and Epidemiologic Research

A. PURPOSE

The American Head and Neck Society (AHNS) invites applications for innovative, multidisciplinary research that integrates emerging technologies with translational clinical and epidemiologic studies in head and neck cancer (HNC). The goal of this FOA is to close critical knowledge gaps that impede early detection, precision prevention, effective, and cost-effective treatment, especially among patients with locally advanced disease and those experiencing treatment-related morbidity.

This FOA encourages research projects that apply emerging tools, such as single-cell and spatial multi-omics, AI-enabled digital pathology, advanced imaging, wearable/remote monitoring devices, and real-time data integration platforms, to elucidate disease mechanisms, identify novel biomarkers, and enable patient-centered intervention strategies.

B. BACKGROUND

Head and neck cancer (HNC), encompassing malignancies of the oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, salivary glands, anterior skull base, cutaneous, and associated anatomic regions, remains a major public health concern with significant morbidity and mortality. While advancements in multimodal treatment have improved outcomes for some subsets of patients, those with locally advanced disease or treatment-related complications continue to experience poor quality of life and diminished survival.

There is a critical need to integrate cutting-edge research technologies to transform our understanding of HNC biology and improve clinical care. Integration of these technologies within clinical and population-level studies can enable biomarker discovery, mechanistic insight, early detection, risk stratification, and tailored therapeutic interventions.

This FOA seeks to catalyze a new generation of translational and population science investigators who will use emerging technologies to study the etiology, heterogeneity, progression, and outcomes of HNC in real-world clinical settings.

C. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This initiative will support research projects that incorporate one or more emerging technologies into clinical or epidemiologic translational research focused on head and neck cancer. Proposed projects should aim to generate novel insights or enable practical applications that directly inform early detection, risk prediction, or treatment response.

Examples of relevant scientific themes include, but are not limited to:

- **Single-cell and spatial multi-omics:** Mapping cellular heterogeneity and tumor microenvironmental interactions associated with HNC progression, response, or resistance.
- **AI-enabled digital pathology and imaging:** Development and validation of AI models to predict treatment outcomes or stratify risk from H&E slides or radiologic imaging.
- **Wearable and remote monitoring technologies:** Integration of physiologic or behavioral data to monitor treatment response or long-term sequelae in HNC survivors.
- **Real-time data integration and informatics platforms:** Creation of interoperable frameworks linking clinical, omics, imaging, and patient-reported data to drive precision oncology.
- **Disparities-focused translational epidemiology:** Leveraging technologies to investigate biologic, social, or structural determinants of outcome disparities in high-risk HNC populations.

D. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must:



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- Focus on head and neck cancer.
- Clearly describe how emerging technology will be integrated into the research design.
- Include a translational or population-based clinical component (e.g., access to biospecimens, annotated cohorts, clinical trial populations, longitudinal follow-up).
- Propose strategies for technology validation and/or potential clinical implementation.
- Address disparities in access, detection, or outcomes wherever applicable.

Optional but encouraged:

- Multidisciplinary team science, incorporating expertise from oncology, engineering, epidemiology, informatics, AI, pathology, and imaging.
- Use of existing platforms, consortia, or infrastructure (e.g., SPOREs, TCGA, EHR-linked biobanks, clinical trials networks, etc).
- Plans for open science, data sharing, or public dissemination of developed tools or resources.

E. ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must reside in the U.S. or Canada and be medical students, residents, fellows, graduate students, PhDs, or faculty members at the rank of associate professor or below. All applicants must be members of the American Head and Neck Society (AHNS) in good standing. Trainee applicants (medical students, residents, fellows, and graduate students) are expected to have appropriate faculty support and mentorship. Previous AHNS or AAO-HNSF research grant recipients are eligible to apply. However, applicants who have successfully obtained funding from a private or federal agency for the same research project are not eligible. Applicants who submit proposals to multiple funding sources for the same project and are notified of an award from both AHNS and another agency must choose only one award. **Applications submitted by ineligible principal investigators will not be reviewed by the CORE Study Section.**

F. CONDITIONS

Research supported by this award should be specifically directed to Integrating Emerging Technologies for Head and Neck Cancer Translational Clinical and Epidemiologic Research. Projects that demonstrate collaborative effort with members of other related disciplines are encouraged. Projects must be designed so as to yield useful information within the period of the award, but priority will be given to projects that are also innovative with promise to develop into new long-range or expanded research programs capable of attracting funding from other sources.

The grant application must be accompanied by letters of support from the Chair of the candidate's academic department and from the principal scientific advisor or mentor. These letters are to indicate a general level of support of the applicant, the fact that the Department will make time, space, and other resources accessible for completion of the project, and that the applicant will have appropriate supervision/support throughout the period of the grant. Applicants must obtain letters of support/understanding from all key personnel on the project.

G. TERMS

1. **Amount:** \$15,000 maximum
2. **Period:** 12 months, non-renewable
3. **Use of Funds:** A detailed budget and budget justification constitute part of the application and will be evaluated as part of the review process. Funding may not be used to support the Principal Investigator's salary during the period of the award. Allowable expenses include consultant fees (e.g., statistician); salary support for research assistants or other technical personnel; computer



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software or hardware; purchase and maintenance of experimental animals; laboratory supplies and services; and expenses related to publication of results directly related to the supported project, exclusive of reprint costs. Equipment and supplies purchased with this Award become the property of the recipient institution. The AHNS prefers not to pay institutional (indirect) costs for this very modest award; if the institution is unwilling to waive such costs, however, they are limited to no more than 10% of the Total Direct Costs (sum of amounts requested for personnel, consultant costs, equipment, supplies, patient/animal care costs, and other expenses). The Total Costs (direct + indirect) may not exceed \$15,000.

4. **Review:** Applications will be reviewed by members of the Centralized Otolaryngology Research Efforts (CORE) Study Section, composed of AHNS members designated for the Study Section, and members of the AAO-HNSF CORE Study Section Subcommittee. Recommendations for funding must be approved by the AHNS Council.
5. **Notification:** Letters of notification will be sent in June of the award year. Please do not call the AAO HNSF or AHNS office prior to that time to inquire about results.
6. **Start Date:** The recipient of the AHNS Presidential Award: Integrating Emerging Technologies for Head and Neck Cancer Translational Clinical and Epidemiologic Research will be announced publicly at the closest AAO- HNS Foundation Annual Meeting immediately following the award. The award may be activated as early as July 1 of the year of award, but no later than January 1 of the following year.

H. FORMAT

Applications are in a similar format to the National Institutes of Health. All applications must be completed and submitted online through ProposalCentral at <https://proposalcentral.altum.com>. Visit <http://www.entnet.org/CORE> to begin the application process.

I. SIGNATURES

The Principal Investigator, Department Chairman, and Institution official are required to sign the original grant application (all signatures must appear on copies). The grant is legally awarded to the institution with which the Principal Investigator is affiliated, *not to the investigator or his/her Division or Department*. For this reason, it is very important that applicants comply with their home institution's policies on pre submission processing of grant applications. This can take time, so it is wise to plan ahead, allowing adequate time for processing and approvals. Applicants are advised to consult their institution's offices of research administration or sponsored projects for information on processing requirements for an application prior to its submission.

J. APPROVALS

If the proposed research involves human subjects or vertebrate animals at any time, the project must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). This approval should be obtained prior to submission and submitted with the application. If such approval is unavoidably delayed, enter "pending" instead of the approval date and upload the documentation that you have submitted to your institution seeking approval so the Study Section can see that the appropriate steps are in process to obtain the approval. Grant applications which are not supported by evidence of the appropriate IRB or IACUC approvals will not receive funding until such approval letters are submitted. In no case may the project start be delayed beyond January 1 of the year following the award. Any changes in the proposed work required by an IRB or IACUC to secure approval must be submitted to the AHNS with the follow-up certification, prior to review or after the work is in progress.

K. LETTER OF INTENT

All applicants must submit a Letter of Intent online no later than December 15, 2025. The letter of intent is completed online and includes the title of the project, the principal investigator, and an abstract of the work. This will facilitate planning review requirements. Visit <http://www.entnet.org/CORE> to begin the letter of intent process.



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L. RECEIPT DATE

Allow yourself enough time to have the appropriate individuals review your application. Once your application is complete, print your cover page and have all of the necessary individuals sign. Keep in mind that it may take a few days to obtain all of the necessary signatures. The CORE grants program is paperless, so no hard copies of the signature page are to be mailed. Once all signatures have been obtained, you should scan the document and upload the .pdf to the system and retain the original for your files if needed. Once the signature page has been uploaded, run the checks within the system and click 'SUBMIT.' You will receive a confirmation email indicating that your proposal has officially been submitted.

ALL materials must be submitted online by 11:59pm, Eastern Standard Time, January 15, 2026.

M. FOLLOW-UP

In carrying out its stewardship of research programs, the AHNS or AAO-HNSF may request information essential to an assessment of the effectiveness of this program. Accordingly, the recipient is hereby notified that s/he may be contacted after the completion of the award for periodic updates on various aspects of employment history, publications, support from research grants or contracts, honors and awards, professional activities, and other information helpful in evaluating the impact of the program.

N. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Recipients of the AHNS Presidential Award: Integrating Emerging Technologies for Head and Neck Cancer Translational Clinical and Epidemiologic Research are required to complete an interim report at 6 months. Within 30 days of the completion of the project, the awardee will submit a final report suitable for publication. All publications resulting from this Award shall acknowledge the contribution of AHNS Presidential Award: Integrating Emerging Technologies for Head and Neck Cancer Translational Clinical and Epidemiologic Research. A final financial report must be submitted within 90 days of the close of the project. Any publications resulting from a project supported with the award shall acknowledge the contribution of the AHNS Presidential Award: Integrating Emerging Technologies for Head and Neck Cancer Translational Clinical and Epidemiologic Research.

If you have questions about this funding opportunity announcement, please contact Loren Hamilton (loren@ahns.info) at the American Head and Neck Society (AHNS).