Alzheimer’s Research UK
Invitation to tender

Understanding the link between sport, brain health and dementia risk - opportunity to tender

1. Invitation to tender
Alzheimer’s Research UK (ARUK) invites tenders to groups able to complete a landscape review and stakeholder engagement to help understand research prioritisation in the area of sport, brain health and dementia risk.

2. About Alzheimer’s Research UK
Alzheimer’s Research UK is the UK’s leading dementia research charity, dedicated to causes, diagnosis, prevention, treatment and cure. Backed by our passionate scientists and supporters, we’re challenging the way people think about dementia, uniting the big thinkers in the field and funding the innovative science that will deliver cures.

With an active funding portfolio of 135 research projects worth around £35M we are seeking to achieve our mission of bringing about the first life changing treatment for dementia by 2025. We aim to do this by building a collaborative research community that works together to drive progress.

One of our areas of strategic priority is prevention of the diseases that cause dementia and we have a number of active projects running. There have been numerous studies linking physical activity to brain health and recently, there have been a number of studies published linking certain sports injuries to an increased risk of developing dementia or the diseases that cause dementia.

It is clear that physical activity is good for brain health and should generally be encouraged. However, there is a growing interest in understanding the risk of dementia from concussive and sub-concussive injuries caused by sport.

3. Project background
In 2020 the Lancet Standing Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention and Care identified 12 potential “modifiable” risk factors for dementia – meaning factors that may be in our power to change. Amongst those risk factors were obesity, physical inactivity and hypertension which can be linked to a lower physical activity levels. The researchers also suggested that traumatic brain injury may contribute to 3% of dementia cases.

We do not fully understand why these links exist or what the benefits and the costs of sport are for the overall risk of developing dementia.
Despite broad interest from professional sports people, clubs, the dementia research community and the general public, there remain many unanswered questions around the role of sports injuries and potential links to dementia. There is also no clear consensus on what research should be done to answer these questions.

Given the clear link to our strategic priorities, the many unanswered questions, and the growing interest in this area we wish to take a leading role in defining research priorities to help us further understand the field of sport and dementia prevention.

4. Expected outputs and scope of the work

We expect several outputs from this work;

- A landscape review outlining the current evidence for both the benefits and the costs of sport in the context of dementia risk. For more information about the expected scope of this review see section on scope below.
- An analysis of research gaps in the field of sport, brain health and dementia.
- Research recommendations that have had input from broad stakeholders and reflect the evidence and consensus view on clear next steps required to fill evidence gaps in the field.

We propose a broad scope for this work to look at evidence and the quality of evidence addressing the following questions.

- What is known about the overall benefits of sport to brain health?
- Which sports are most associated with head injuries and which types of head injury are incurred in sports (multiple minor Traumatic Brain Injury vs major)?
- What evidence is linking these sports to cognitive decline and dementia later in life?
- Is there evidence comparing within sports (e.g. positions played) and between sports to link specific types of injury with brain pathologies and/or cognitive decline and dementia?
- What are the consequences (both intentional and unintentional) of any interventions that aim to reduce the risk of head injury in sports in different countries?
- Does participation in some sports bias towards those with other risk factor (or protective factors) for dementia?
- Are there critical periods for given benefits or risk? Does sport in adolescence differ from sport in middle-age, in terms of risks and benefits?

In developing your proposal, the following may be helpful in further understanding the scope.

- Evidence published in the last 10 years is particularly relevant and you may want to consider a cut off to limit the scope of the review
We are interested in understanding the costs and benefits of sports to brain health in international as well as UK sports
We are interested in understanding the overall findings as well as any variability between findings
You may want to consider sequencing this work to answer earlier questions first in order to limit the scope of the later questions
In developing stakeholder engagement work, it is important that applicants involve both relevant scientific experts in the field as well as the voices of people with lived experience of dementia and/or sport-related TBI.
We encourage applicants to consider the methodology most appropriate for the questions posed and to justify those methods in the context of balancing quality, cost and time.

5. Working with ARUK

Given the importance of this work, ARUK would like to take an active role in shaping the scope and methods used with the support of an expert Steering Group. Below is a table outlining ARUK’s role and responsibilities and that of the successful research team who are tasked with completing the work.

We would expect to have meetings and calls to discuss progress and decision making.

Katherine Hanlon (Research Knowledge Officer) will be the project manager at ARUK for this work. Due to the iterative nature of this work, the project manager will work closely with the successful applicants to ensure the work meets the aims of ARUK as set out in the brief and any interim findings can be fed into ARUK’s ongoing work.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set up a steering group to advise on the project</td>
<td>Ahead of project initiation</td>
<td>ARUK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm scope, project methods and inputs and outputs</td>
<td>Ahead of project initiation</td>
<td>ARUK with input and agreement from Research Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop milestones</td>
<td>Ahead of project initiation</td>
<td>Research Team with agreement and sign off from ARUK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop project protocols and stakeholder list</td>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
<td>Research Team with input from ARUK</td>
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<td>Identify and address any concerns with meeting milestones and project management</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Research Team</td>
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<td>Report on progress at pre-agreed times</td>
<td>Ongoing and as agreed</td>
<td>Research Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approve progress updates</td>
<td>Ongoing and as agreed</td>
<td>ARUK</td>
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6. Timelines

Milestones and timelines will be discussed and agreed with applicants before an award is made. However, given the broad scope of the questions posed our expectation is that all milestones would be completed within six months of project initiation.

7. Tender content and format

Submitted tenders should fulfil the content and format requirements set out below.

The tender document should be clearly presented, and should contain the following:

- The name(s) of the individuals submitting the tender
- An indication of the individual with whom all communication should be made, and the supply of his/her contact details

Tender documents should be no more than 4500 words in length.

Additional information can be provided as appendices and should be labelled and referenced in the main text.

Tender documents should be provided in an electronic format.

8. Closing date and submission arrangements

The closing date for submitting complete tenders is Monday 7 June at 12pm.

Complete tenders should be submitted by the closing date to Katherine.Hanlon@alzheimersresearchuk.org

ARUK may contact those who submit a tender to seek clarification on any elements of a bid that are unclear.

9. Tender evaluation

ARUK will ensure a confidential fair and equitable evaluation of tender submissions, in line with tender requirements set out below.

- Meets tender format requirements
- Succinctly outlines the approach proposed to undertake the work
- Succinctly outlines the methods for developing the search strategy and resources drawn on
- Demonstrates an understanding of the brief
- Commitment to involve relevant stakeholders including people with lived experience
- Demonstrates how the learning from the review will be translated to engagement activities to inform prioritisation of research in this topic area
- Demonstrates an understanding of issues related to sport, brain health and dementia and the nuances of risk benefit analysis
• Describes experience of successfully completing comparable projects
• Demonstrates a considered, structured approach to planning activity to complete all elements within the defined timeline
• Demonstrates reasonable and realistic itemisation of costs relating delivering the project
• Demonstrates an appropriate way to manage the budget
• Indicates where there are potential conflicts of interest and outlines how they would be handled

10. Schedule for considering tenders
ARUK will consider tenders between Tuesday 8 June and Friday 11 June. Notifications of the outcome of this review will occur on or after Friday 11 June. ARUK may request an interview to enable a decision to be reached, which will occur on Monday 14 June.

The contract, if awarded, will be awarded to the tenderer that, in the opinion of ARUK, best demonstrates fulfilment of the criteria set out in section 9. ARUK intends to be in a position to award the tender and to finalise the contract with successful tenderer between Friday 18 June and Friday 25 June.

However, the following applies:
• ARUK reserves the right not to award a contract as a result of this invitation to tender process
• ARUK is not committed to accepting the lowest tender received
• ARUK is not liable to pay compensation in connection with an unsuccessful tender submission, or in any way to reimburse the costs attached to submitting a tender

11. Enquiries
Informal enquiries about the tender process and the submission of tenders should be made to the following email address: Katherine.Hanlon@alzheimersresearchuk.org