opnMe by Boehringer Ingelheim

Decode obesity drivers across dogs and cats

How would you propose to identify conserved obesity-driving molecular drivers across dogs and cats while leveraging species-specific mechanisms for target and biomarker discoveries?

Submit your scientific proposal for a chance to be selected to conduct your proposed research plan as part of your PostDoc project at the Development facilities of Boehringer Ingelheim in Biberach, Germany, one of the leading pharmaceutical companies worldwide. This opportunity is open for submissions through October 21, 2026, 11:59 pm PST.

Boehringer Ingelheim

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What is the context of the opportunity that we are currently offering?

Obesity is a growing unmet medical need in companion animals and a shared biological challenge across Animal Health and Human Pharma. Dogs and cats develop obesity under similar environmental pressures, yet they differ markedly in metabolic disease susceptibility and progression. For example, cats are particularly prone to obesity-associated diabetes mellitus, whereas dogs exhibit distinct patterns of insulin resistance, inflammatory responses, and obesity-related comorbidities. These differences are likely to reflect species-specific regulatory mechanisms operating across multiple tissues and organ systems, including adipose tissue, liver, pancreas, skeletal muscle, and immune compartments, as well as the endocrine and inflammatory networks that coordinate whole-body energy homeostasis.

Despite advances in obesity research, the extent to which regulatory networks driving obesity are conserved across canine and feline species remains poorly understood.

While adipose tissue acts as a central endocrine and inflammatory organ, the liver and pancreas are critical regulators of glucose, lipid, and insulin homeostasis. Differences in adipose tissue signaling, hepatic metabolic flexibility, and pancreatic adaptation to chronic nutrient excess may contribute to the divergent susceptibility of dogs and cats to obesity-associated metabolic disease. Understanding the interplay between these tissues is therefore essential for identifying conserved disease drivers, species-specific modifiers, and robust therapeutic targets.

Rather than representing a limitation, these species-specific differences provide a powerful opportunity for translational target discovery. Dogs and cats can be viewed as naturally occurring variations of a shared metabolic disease system, where conserved biological pathways reveal fundamental drivers of obesity, while divergent molecular and cellular responses highlight mechanisms that influence disease susceptibility, target sensitivity, efficacy, and safety. Understanding why some regulatory networks remain conserved across species while others differ may help identify therapeutic targets that are both biologically central and resilient to biological variability.

The proposed postdoctoral research program within Boehringer Ingelheim's Animal Health Non-Infectious Diseases group should apply innovative approaches to suitable *in vitro* and *ex vivo* canine and feline models to identify conserved molecular drivers of obesity, such as genes, proteins, pathways, metabolites, cell states, and network hubs, while systematically characterizing species-specific regulatory mechanisms.

By integrating molecular, functional, and network-level datasets across relevant metabolic tissues, the project aims to distinguish conserved driver networks from species-specific modifiers and thereby prioritize robust, pharmacologically actionable therapeutic targets and biomarkers.

To maximize the translational value of the project, applicants should incorporate, wherever scientifically appropriate and feasible, a comparison of canine and feline findings with relevant

human obesity data. Potential comparators may include public human datasets, human obesity cohorts, adipose tissue transcriptomic resources, and suitable internal data accessible through collaboration. The project is expected to engage closely with Boehringer Ingelheim Human Pharma research teams to align comparative analyses, share expertise and resources, and jointly assess which conserved mechanisms, targets, and biomarkers have relevance across dogs, cats, and humans.

The successful candidate will work within a highly collaborative and multidisciplinary environment where Animal Health laboratories are closely integrated with Human Pharma research teams, providing exposure to both cutting-edge biology and industry drug discovery processes.

What potential solutions could be in scope?

- Novel systems biology approaches to identify conserved obesity driver networks across species
- Innovative experimental strategies using canine and feline adipose tissue explants, primary adipocytes, stromal vascular cells, or related *ex vivo* and *in vitro* models
- Multi-omics approaches including transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, and integrated data analysis
- Comparative network modeling to distinguish conserved pathways from species-specific modifiers
- Identification and validation of druggable molecular targets and associated biomarkers
- Methods for evaluating translational relevance and pharmacological risk

What potential solutions would be out of scope?

- Development of species-specific veterinary products without relevance to conserved disease mechanisms
- Purely clinical or epidemiological studies lacking mechanistic investigation
- Studies focused exclusively on infectious diseases
- Projects without an experimental or systems biology component
- Solutions limited to descriptive observations without target identification or mechanistic insight
- Research requiring *in vivo* animal experimentation as the primary focus
- Approaches unrelated to obesity, metabolic dysfunction, adipose tissue biology, or target discovery

What will be the reward for the winner?

As a winner of this call, you will have the unique opportunity to pursue your own submitted research project as a fully resourced PostDoc project in the Animal Health NID team at Boehringer Ingelheim at the Discovery Research site in Biberach/Riss, Germany.

You will obtain a position for up to 3 years* with Boehringer Ingelheim within a cross-functional, international team of world-class scientists working on non-infectious diseases in companion animals, integrated with Human Pharma research teams. The grant would also allow you to carry out parts of your planned experiments at your current home institution. [*The offered position initially covers a duration of 24 months with an option for extension by another 12 months.]

You want to learn more about living in Biberach at the river Riss?

Find out more here

At Boehringer Ingelheim, you will have access to a fully equipped laboratory in a state-of-the-art research facility including access to all relevant tools (e.g., adipose tissue from cats and dogs) and technologies. Benefit from mentoring through our internal experts, have the chance to attend international conferences, and to publish your results in high-ranking journals. You will be part of the vibrant PostDoc community at Boehringer Ingelheim in Biberach with manifold opportunities for scientific, cross-functional exchanges for your personal development. You will have the opportunity to learn the process and challenges of drug discovery from the inside, including additional training and mentoring programs.

In addition, benefit from the rich packages for employee benefit. Our most important asset in achieving our global vision is our people. We prioritize your growth, investing in our people through mentoring, coaching, skill-building, leadership development, and academic support. Our infrastructure promotes wellness with sports groups, health counseling, onsite medical services, and regular check-ups. Achieve work-life balance with flexible work hours, remote working, childcare support, counseling, and convenient amenities. We ensure financial health with employer loans, private insurances, access to discounts, and a company pension scheme. Benefit also from our excellent and healthy on-site catering and the opportunity for take-away meals. We offer relocation support and interim accommodation to make joining us easy.

What are the requirements to participate in this call?

- PhD with strong background in Molecular and Cell Biology or veterinary sciences
- Experience in systems biology, bioinformatics, or multi-omics analysis is desirable.
- Hands-on *in vitro* and *ex vivo* experience in the field of metabolic disease
- Displayed examples of creativity that led to out-of-the-box scientific ideas and results
- Good understanding of the underlying biology and the pathways that drive the pathophysiology of developing obesity- either in pets or in humans
- Track record of independent research as exemplified through publications or patents
- Very good oral communication and presentation skills as well as the ability to work in multidisciplinary teams in a matrix environment
- Fluent language skill in English are mandatory, German language skills is a plus

What information should be included in your answer submission?

Please use our PostDoc grant application template to provide a 4–5-page non-confidential proposal (available for download on the following site). Please complement with your CV, publication list, and recommendation letters.

If confidential data exists that would strengthen the proposal, please indicate that information is available to share under a Confidential Disclosure Agreement (CDA). If we find the non-confidential concept proposal sufficiently interesting, we will execute a CDA for confidential discussions.

What are the individual steps and timelines for the overall program?

Step 1	Please complete your application including a project proposal by October 21, 2026, 11:59 pm PST at the very latest. A full application package consists of your CV including references and a publication list. In addition, please submit the scientific project proposal based on our template (available for download from the following site). Please note that we will be unable to accept applications without a research proposal addressing our scientific question.
Step 2	We plan to finalize the review of all applications through November 2026.
Step 3	All final candidates will be invited for an opn2TALENTS interview week that will take place between December 7-11, 2026. Even as we plan to give enough time for the finalists to prepare their travel plans, we suggest that you block this time frame in your calendars already now. Please expect that you will be invited for only one day during this time frame. Depending on your location, please reserve more than one day for travel. All final candidates have the chance to present and discuss their research proposal at an internal meeting. Please prepare a PowerPoint version of your project proposal and be prepared for an in-depth scientific discussion of your ideas and approaches. Please also be prepared for additional interviews with members of the scientific team and our human resources department. Please address any questions you may have during this week as well.
Step 4	Beginning of January 2027, we plan to announce the final winner of the opn2TALENTS PostDoc grant.
Step 5	February 1, 2027, represents the earliest start date to work on your project at our Research and Development site in Biberach, Germany.

How to apply?

- Check the outline of the opn2TALENTS grant opportunity "Cross-species systems biology of pet obesity" on opnMe.
- Alternatively, you may click the "Get Application Template" banner.
- Follow the instructions to upload your submission document (requires login or registration).
- The upload allows you to attach additional application files such as your CV, publication list, and references. Please note that the maximum file size is 15MB per file.
- You will be able to access your final submitted collaboration proposal in your personal dashboard and follow its review status.
- Please also visit the FAQ section on opnMe.com to learn more about our opn2TALENTS program.

What else is important to Boehringer Ingelheim?

- Our purpose is to transform lives for generations. Therefore, we developed three key principles for our PostDoc program which are determining our plans and actions: Drive cutting-edge science, new concepts and technologies; enrich Boehringer Ingelheim's innovation ecosystem with highly motivated, young fellows, who will help to build on science to develop new medicines; and train the next generation of leading scientists.
- Our campus community culture is great for sharing ideas and makes it easy to access technologies, meet experts, and approach leaders of all levels. There's a great spirit of freedom, fluidity, and fierce collaboration.
- Interactions are sound and informal. It's not particularly hierarchical, more team-based with a start-up attitude. We are always keen to help and speak up, open to positive change and new ideas that support our mission to improve lives.
- Our Speak-Up policy is an important part of our Code of Conduct. Only in this way we can continuously develop and improve as a company.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is an integral part of Boehringer Ingelheim's identity; a key element of our culture and contributes to our 'Sustainable Development – For Generations'.
- Our core values of empathy, respect, passion, and trust nurture a diverse, collaborative, open and inclusive environment which is key to innovation, value creation and sustainable growth. With the inclusion of various experiences, backgrounds, and characteristics, Boehringer Ingelheim creates an openness to different approaches, solutions, and perspectives, all contributing to create "Value through Innovation".