MEDIculous REMeDy
Doctoral Network

Doctoral Candidate Vacancy

Doctoral Candidate Position: Clinical Psychology

Self-Stigma in Metabolic Bariatric Surgery

The **MEDIculous REMeDy Doctoral Network** invites applications for a fully funded doctoral position (clinical psychologist) at Leipzig University, Germany. The position is funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Doctoral Networks programme.

Position	Doctoral Candidate (DC14), full-time, fixed-term for 36 months
Project	Self-Stigma in Metabolic Bariatric Surgery
Host institution	Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy, Leipzig University Medical Center, Leipzig, Germany
Degree	Doctoral degree awarded by Leipzig University
Supervisors	Prof. Dr. Anja Hilbert (main supervisor), Dr. Claudia Huebner (co-supervisor)
Secondment	University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Bilbao, Spain
Expected start	July – October 2027
Application deadline	10 January 2027, 23:59 CET
Apply via	MEDIculous REMeDy online recruitment portal

About MEDIculous REMeDy

MEDIculous REMeDy ("Metabolic disease heterogeneity definition, prevention and remission with targeted interventions") is a pan-European, interdisciplinary MSCA Doctoral Network coordinated by Helmholtz Munich, Germany, and running from January 2027 to December 2030.

Obesity, diabetes and their complications are a rapidly growing scientific and societal challenge across Europe. Their causes, clinical trajectories and treatment responses differ widely between individuals, which limits the effectiveness of standardised therapies. The network therefore aims to map this heterogeneity – from early metabolic dysfunction and obesity to advanced diabetes with complications – and to identify mechanisms, biomarkers, therapeutic targets and treatment responses that enable patient stratification and personalised treatment.

The consortium brings together 12 beneficiaries and 18 associated partners from academia, healthcare, industry, public institutions and patient organisations across Europe and Canada.

Doctoral candidates receive interdisciplinary, translational and intersectoral training with tailored career development, transferable skills and leadership training. Gender-responsive research design, open science and public and patient engagement are core principles of the training programme, preparing doctoral candidates for both academic and non-academic careers.

The Project: Self-Stigma in Metabolic Bariatric Surgery

People living with obesity, particularly those with severe obesity, face pervasive weight stigma and self-stigma, which negatively affect weight regulation, mental health and physical health. This doctoral project (DC 14) investigates the role of self-stigma as a potential determinant of long-term outcomes after metabolic bariatric surgery (MBS). It aims to elucidate how self-stigma changes across the MBS pathway, how it predicts long-term weight, mental and physical health outcomes, and which biopsychosocial mechanisms mediate these associations.

The doctoral candidate will pursue three main objectives:

- to characterise long-term trajectories of self-stigma and examine their predictive value for postoperative weight loss, weight regain and health outcomes;
- to identify biopsychosocial mediators underlying these associations using advanced longitudinal data analysis methods; and
- to develop and pilot-test a web-based intervention to reduce post-bariatric self-stigma using a participatory co-design approach.

The project combines longitudinal cohort data, innovative analytical approaches and intervention development to generate new insights into self-stigma as a modifiable factor influencing MBS outcomes. Expected outcomes include the first long-term evidence on self-stigma trajectories after MBS, a better understanding of the mechanisms linking self-stigma to clinical outcomes, and pilot evidence for a scalable, cost-effective digital intervention that can be integrated into post-MBS care. The doctoral candidate will also contribute to establishing a framework for studying self-stigma in emerging obesity treatments such as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1)-based therapies.

Host Institution: Leipzig University, Leipzig, Germany

Leipzig University Medical Center is an integral part of the University, combining clinical and research expertise in an academic medical environment. Its research strengths include obesity, metabolism and related diseases, providing an excellent setting for interdisciplinary and translational research. The doctoral degree will be awarded by Leipzig University. Its Graduate Academy is the central institution supporting doctoral researchers and early postdocs at Leipzig University. It provides counselling on doctoral studies, conflict resolution, career development and skills training, complemented by workshops and interdisciplinary training opportunities offered by the Medical Faculty.

Main Supervisor (Leipzig University): Prof. Dr. Anja Hilbert

https://behavioralmedicine.net/

Joining Prof. Hilbert's research group at Leipzig University's Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy offers doctoral candidates the opportunity to work in a highly interdisciplinary and internationally recognised research environment at the interface of behavioural medicine, obesity research and eating disorder research. The lab provides close scientific mentoring, a supportive and collaborative atmosphere, and opportunities to develop advanced expertise in clinical research methods, digital interventions and translational research. Doctoral candidates benefit from integration into a strong academic network and contribute to impactful research with direct relevance for improving the care and long-term outcomes of individuals with severe obesity.

Co-Supervisor (Leipzig University): Dr. Claudia Huebner

https://www.uniklinikum-leipzig.de/einrichtungen/psychosomatik/Seiten/verhaltensmedizin.aspx

DC Roles and Responsibilities

Research and analysis techniques used in the project:

- Designing longitudinal research protocols to investigate trajectories and the predictive value of self-stigma in the Psychosocial Registry of Obesity Surgery, based on a comprehensive literature review
- Developing expertise in clinical research methods for longitudinal cohort studies, with a focus on the Psychosocial Registry of Obesity Surgery
- Applying advanced longitudinal data analysis techniques, including latent growth curve modelling and machine learning, to address key research questions
- Developing a digital self-stigma reduction intervention for post-MBS patients using a participatory co-design framework
- Designing, conducting and analysing a pilot study to evaluate the feasibility and preliminary efficacy of the intervention
- Disseminating results in international peer-reviewed journals and at scientific conferences, and actively participating in the network-wide training, outreach and public and patient engagement activities of MEDIculous REMeDy

Planned secondments:

Two 2-week research stays are planned at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Bilbao, Spain, focusing on advanced statistical methods under the supervision of Prof. Irantzu Barrio Barraza.

What we offer

- **Employment:** full-time employment contract for 36 months, with salary and social security coverage in accordance with MSCA Doctoral Network rules and German employment legislation.
- **Salary:** monthly MSCA funding contribution allocated to the position amounting to EUR 4.768,12, including the living and mobility allowances. Please note that this figure represents the total employer cost (employer gross) and does not correspond to the gross

salary paid directly to the researcher. Leipzig University will determine the actual contractual gross salary in accordance with applicable German employment and social security regulations. It will be lower than the indicated amount due to employer social security contributions. The net salary will depend on individual tax and social security circumstances.

- **Training:** project-specific training in longitudinal data analysis and intervention development, plus network-wide scientific, transferable-skills and leadership training within an international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral consortium.
- **Network:** international secondments, network meetings and close collaboration with leading European research groups, healthcare, industry and patient organisations.
- **Environment:** close supervision in a supportive, internationally recognised research group and the services of the Leipzig University Graduate Academy.

What we expect

Academic qualifications:

An excellent Master's degree or equivalent in Clinical Psychology.

Desired skills and personal qualities:

- Native or near-native proficiency in spoken and written German (required for work with patients and registry data)
- Very good command of English
- Good clinical psychology skills in assessment and intervention
- Excellent methodological and statistical skills
- Good knowledge of obesity, weight-related stigma and self-stigma
- Experience in conducting clinical research projects
- Strong teamwork and communication skills

Additional requirements:

Documents required by the employing institution for international graduate students are listed here: https://www.uni-leipzig.de/en/international.

Eligibility criteria (MSCA)

Applicants must meet the following MSCA Doctoral Network criteria at the time of recruitment:

- **Mobility rule:** applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Germany for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the recruitment date.
- **Career stage:** applicants must not already hold a doctoral degree.
- **Nationality:** applicants of any nationality are eligible.

How to apply

Applications must be submitted exclusively via the MEDIculous REMeDy online recruitment portal. Applicants register for an applicant profile, select their preferred doctoral project(s) – please indicate DC14 – and upload the following documents:

- Curriculum vitae
- Motivation letter explaining your interest in DC14 and how your background fits the project
- Academic transcripts and degree certificates (Bachelor's and Master's)
- Contact details of academic referees

Application deadline: 10 January 2027, 23:59 CET

Recruitment timeline:

- Invitations to interviews: mid-February 2027
- Virtual interview symposium: early March 2027
- Offers: March – April 2027
- Start of the doctoral project: July – October 2027

Contact

For scientific questions about DC14, please contact Prof. Dr. Anja Hilbert, Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy, Leipzig University Medical Center (e-mail: anja.hilbert@medizin.uni-leipzig.de). Further information about the network: https://www.mediculous-remedy.eu/

Equal opportunities

MEDIculous REMeDy and Leipzig University are committed to equal opportunities, diversity and a fair, transparent and merit-based recruitment process in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. We welcome applications from all qualified candidates regardless of gender, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Applicants with severe disabilities will be given preference in the case of equal qualifications.

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