How to join HEADSpAcE

Applicant guide

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Contents

1. Introduction

HEADSpAcE is an international consortium of scientists involved in research on head and neck cancer, comprising oral cavity, oropharynx, pharynx and larynx. Although originally organized among principal investigators of epidemiological case-control studies of head and neck cancer, HEADSpAcE is now open to external investigators with ongoing studies in head and neck cancer epidemiological research. The eligibility criteria for HEADSpAcE membership is shown below.

HEADSpAcE members are epidemiologists and clinicians involved in head and neck cancer studies and scientists with expertise in molecular domains relevant to head and neck research. Members are expected to bring to the consortium their expertise, ideas and resources, including results, raw data and biological samples.

Members are expected to have their own funding as funding cannot be provided through HEADSpAcE from the EU or the IARC

Membership is in two stages:

1. Decision by HEADSpAcE General Assembly
2. Becomes fully effective upon inclusion in EU Grant Agreement and acceptance by the EU.

2. Eligibility criteria

Studies are eligible for inclusion in HEADSpAcE if they have the potential to contribute to research on causes, mechanisms and prevention of head and neck cancer within the framework of collaborative projects carried out in the consortium. Studies should be methodologically sound and contribute good-quality data and biological samples. Studies considered for inclusion are *mainly* molecular and genetic epidemiological studies (typically of case-control or cohort design, including both information on exposure to risk factors *from questionnaires or similar sources* and biological samples). However, well-conducted clinical series from understudied populations, and large-scale *case-series* and epidemiological studies without biological samples will also be considered for inclusion.

To be eligible, the following is considered:

- Type and quality of information on exposure to risk factors and potential confounders;
- Type and quality of results of biological measurements;
- Type, amount and quality of biological samples available for further analyses (blood, tumour, normal H&N, other);
- Information on clinical aspects (e.g., treatment) and outcome;
- Sample size (number of cases);
- Uniqueness of study population, e.g., in terms of exposure or genetic background;
- Secured funding.

3. Applying to HEADSpAcE

Simply send an email to **HEADSpAcE@iarc.fr** with:

- How you heard about us
- A brief description of your study using the HEADSpAcE Application Form available on HEADSpAcE website.

We will get back to you on the timeline for the steps described in this guide.

In particular, the application form will be submitted to HEADSpAcE General Assembly for their approval.

4. Admin requirements

Once application is approved by HEADSpAcE General Assembly, applicants will need to go through the following steps to formalize their participation. Access to all the necessary documents will be given through HEADSpAcE password-protected Member's Area.

4.1 Join and sign EU Grant Agreement

A Grant Agreement is in place between the EU and HEADSpAcE Coordinator, IARC, which has been signed by each HEADSpAcE member.

New Members will need to be included in the Grant Agreement through an Amendment. To do so they will need to provide information (see 5.1 Grant amendment), as well as institutional signature on the EU Participant Portal.

4.2 Sign Consortium Agreement

A Consortium Agreement (CA) is in place among HEADSpAcE members, which defines rights and obligations within consortium, in particular confidentiality, liability, intellectual property rights and ownership, duration and termination.

New Members will need to sign the Accession Form as acceptance of the agreement. A prerequisite to do so is to be included in the Grant.

The (unsigned version of the) Consortium Agreement + accession form are available on HEADSpAcE Member's Area under Agreements.

4.3 Sign Asset Donation Agreement – optional

The Asset Donation Agreement (ADA) is a straight-forward two-page document that may need to be signed for prospective recruitment in the event that IARC provide lab materials.

An ADA template can be found in HEADSpAcE Member's Area under Agreements.

4.4 Sign DMTA

One multi-party Data and Material Transfer Agreement (DMTA) is in place among HEADSpAcE members, allowing transfer of material and data to and from any and every HEADSpAcE member.

New Members will need to sign the Accession Form as acceptance of the agreement. A prerequisite to do so is to be included in the Grant and to sign the Consortium Agreement.

The (unsigned version of the) DMTA + accession form are available on HEADSpAcE Member's Area under Agreements.

4.5 Reporting to the EU

All HEADSpAcE Members will need to contribute to scientific reporting required by the EU on a periodic basis. The next report is due early 2022, which will be followed by the final report early 2023. Guidance will be provided on HEADSpAcE Member's Area.

5. Step-by-step process for the Grant Amendment

5.1 Grant amendment

Based on the fact that each Grant Amendment requires several months, amendments for the inclusion of new member will happen 2-4 times a year. Below is a description of the various steps to follow.

5.1.1 Future members need to provide the following documents for inclusion in Grant Amendment

5.1.1.1 PIC number (EU identifier)

Please email your PIC number to HEADSpAcE@iarc.fr.

If your institute does not have a PIC number yet, please register and create one. Please refer to AMGA user manual page 353 "Adding a new beneficiary (AT3; see Article 56.2)" for details on how to do this.

5.1.1.2 Justification for inclusion into HEADSpAcE

An example is given below. Please feel free to edit as necessary, and make sure to describe your contribution, i.e. include a rough estimate of the number of cases and/or controls that will be recruited; include an estimate of the number of cases and/or controls already recruited that could be contributed to HEADSpAcE; etc.

(new member name) will join HEADSpAcE with the aim to increase the number of data available. (new member name) is ……., and could thus prospectively enrich the collection.

The prospective recruitment of approximately xxx non-smokers non-drinkers (NSND) upper aerodigestive tract (UADT) cancer cases will allow a finer understanding of genetic and epigenetic data specific to this population.

During the General Assembly held in March 2019, the consortium approved of CLB joining HEADSpAcE.

Inclusion of CLB into HEADSpAcE will not impact overall budget.

5.1.1.3 Budget

No funds can be provided to contribute to HEADSpAcE, and new members will need to give the EU an estimate of the amount that they will be able to spend on HEADSpAcE, as well as an estimate of time-effort measured in person-month.

Example of person-month: one person working half-time for one year = 6 person-months.

To do so, applicants will need to complete '**Annex – GA budget EU Excel template**' available on HEADSpAcE website.

5.1.1.4 Description of the Action (EU Grant Annex 1 Part A and B)

New members will need to go through the description of HEADSpAcE WorkPackages and overall HEADSpAcE project description, and revise the text as appropriate to reflect their expected contribution.

To do so, applicants will need to review '**Annex – GA Part A and B (Word)**' provided upon request. The word document will need to be revised using track changes.

Changes are expected in the following parts:

- Part A, 1.3.3. WorkPackage description
- Part A, 1.3.6. Summary of project effort in person-months
- Part B c) clinical cohorts

- Part B Data produced within HEADSpAcE

5.1.1.5 Description of Future Member (EU Grant Annex 1 Part B, 4.1 & 4.2)

- Part B.4. Members of the consortium, 4.1 participant
- Part B.4. Members of the consortium, 4.2 Third parties involved in the project (including use of third party resources)

In particular, if several sites will provide samples and data under the same participant, these need to be listed here. This is required to be included in the DMTA at a later stage.

To do so, applicants will need to complete '**Annex – GA Part B Member of Consortium (Word)**' available on HEADSpAcE website.

5.1.2 IARC to launch Grant Amendment

Once all the necessary information is received from applicants, IARC as a Coordinator will launch a Grant Amendment on the EU Participant Portal on behalf of HEADSpAcE consortium.

5.1.3 Future Members need to sign the Grant Amendment on EU Participant Portal

From the EU Participant Portal, an official representative needs to sign the following two documents, to confirm institutional approval of HEADSpAcE participation:

- Declaration of Honour (DoH)

DoH template can be found here. How to sign the DoH is explained here.

- Accession Form

How to sign documents on the EU Portal in general is explained here.

Make sure to assign Roles as required by the EU. In particular, the roles of LEAR, PLSIGN and PFSIGN must be allocated to someone. This can be done when accessing the Portal under 'My Organisation' and 'My Projects' respectively.

IARC will be able to submit the Grant Amendment only after this step is completed.

5.1.4 IARC to submit Grant Amendment on behalf of HEADSpAcE consortium

Only after applicants signed the necessary documents on the EU Participant Portal, IARC as a Coordinator can submit the Amendment. The EU must accept or reject the amendment request within 45 days.

Firstly, it checks whether the request is valid and may request additional information/documents, which must not change the amendment itself. The Commission then has 45 days to assess the request.

Acceptance: If the Commission accepts the request, its authorised representative e-signs the amendment. The coordinator and beneficiaries are formally notified. The countersigned amendment appears in the project's document library, in the Funding & Tenders Portal's 'My Area' section Portal. No further action is required.

Rejection: if the request is invalid, incomplete or wrong, or if the granting authority disagrees with it, the Commission's authorised representative formally rejects it.

6. Scientific process

Once application is approved by HEADSpAcE General Assembly, the scientific inclusion can be initiated while the admin process is being completed. Access to all the necessary documents will be given through HEADSpAcE password-protected Member's Area.

New members will need to:

6.1 Access HEADSpAcE documentation

6.1.1 Study documents (protocol, SOPs, etc.)

The latest version of the study documents are available on HEADSpAcE website password-protected member's area. Password will be shared with potential new members.

HEADSpAcE Member's Area includes:

- HEADSpAcE lifestyle and delay questionnaire (PDF template) – these are tailored to centres. They may be provided in the local language. Centres will need to provide the national average disposable income in their country. Disposable income is the amount of money from all sources available for spending and saving after direct taxes (such as income Tax) have been accounted for. Education system information will also be requested.
- A RedCap data entry guide as well as several video tutorials
- HEADSpAcE study protocol, currently available in English and Spanish
- The list of materials to be used for prospective sample collection
- SOPs for:
    - Plasma collection, processing and storage
    - Assembly of tissue microarrays (TMAs)
    - Immunohistochemistry procedure on FFPE tissue
    - DNA Extraction from FFPE
    - HPV genotyping from FFPE tissue
    - Quality of FFPE slides
    - Slide sharing
- Ethics guidelines

HEADSpAcE Member's Area is regularly updated with new content.

6.2 Obtain local ethics approval / IRB

Check with your institute or local IRB how to obtain the necessary approvals. All documents needed, such as HEADSpAcE consent form template, protocol, etc, are available on HEADSpAcE website password-protected Members' Area. Password will be shared with potential new members.

Once local IRB approval is obtained, please send a copy to IARC, with a translation in English if needed, to begin study at your centre.

6.3 Purchase lab materials as needed

6.3.1 For prospective recruitment

New HEADSpAcE partners will need to purchase the necessary lab materials. A list is provided in HEADSpAcE Member's Area under Patient Recruitment. IARC will provide materials for the first 100 subjects. IARC will also provide labels for sample collection with centre/HEADSpAcE IDs.

HEADSpAcE questionnaire will be accessible online through RedCap and initial HEADSpAcE partners access it using a tablet. New members will to have one as IARC will not provide this.

6.3.2 For retrospective studies

New partners that will store samples on site until needed will not need to purchase lab materials, although they will have to assign HEADSpAcE IDs for the STS.

6.4 Obtain labels with centre and HEADSpAcE IDs from IARC – optional

Labels will be provided on a case-by-case basis. In principle, IARC may provide labels to new members who ship samples at IARC for storage or aliquoting, as needed, for prospective recruitment.

Retrospective studies that will keep their samples on site will not need labels although HEADSpAcE IDs will need to be assigned to samples for the STS.

6.5 Recruit patients / Provide materials and data

Recruitment protocols must be followed for prospective recruitment. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for samples are available on website and must be followed closely. If you would like to add components to the study beyond HEADSpAcE objectives, feel free to do so. The consortium will only utilize data/samples as per consortium objectives.

Transfer of samples and data can start only after the DMTA and prerequisite are signed.

6.5.1 Data collection using RedCap (prospective or existing/retrospective studies)

- For prospective recruitment

All members are required to use RedCap for data collection of HEADSpAcE lifestyle and delay questionnaire. Therefore, new members will need to contact IARC to receive a RedCap account giving access to HEADSpAcE data collection forms.

- For retrospective recruitment / existing studies

If retrospective studies have data compiled in a format that is easy to merge with HEADSpAcE data, then IARC and HEADSpAcE members will use their dataset. However the data required to join HEADSpAcE is likely different than the data collected for the retrospective studies. In this case, IARC will make a copy of the existing HEADSpAcE RedCap forms available to new HEADSpAcE member, and they will need to fill out the RedCap forms with the information that they are able to obtain. IARC will not design specific RedCap forms for retrospective studies. It is expected that there will be missing values if new members did not collect information that is requested in HEADSpAcE RedCap forms.

6.5.2 Sample Tracking System (STS)

The Sample Tracking System (STS) gives information on samples made available by participating partners for HEADSpAcE WorkPackages and potentially additional projects. As long as prospective recruitment continues the STS will be updated regularly.

Retrospective studies will be asked to provide sample information to be included in the STS.

6.5.3 Transfer of samples

The admin process must be completed before starting this step, i.e. inclusion in Grant Agreement, signature of Consortium Agreement and of Data and Material Transfer Agreement.

Samples will be stored on site by each new member until needed for HEADSpAcE analyses, whether for prospective or retrospective studies. If space is an issue, samples may be stored in the IARC biobank depending on availability of space. For details on sample shipment, please refer to Appendix 9 of HEADSpAcE protocol, available in HEADSpAcE Member's Area.

6.5.4 Use of samples

Depending on sample collection timelines, samples may be included into existing HEADSpAcE WorkPackages. If WorkPackage sample limits have been reached, samples will remain stored on site by each new member until needed for projects. Using the information in the STS, all HEADSpAcE partners may propose new analyses to the consortium.

- **Prospective recruitment**

Using RedCap information from sample log sheets, sample information will be added to the STS for HEADSpAcE partners to view.

- **Retrospective/existing studies**

The STS will be updated every 6 months or every year at which point, the centres will have to take inventory and inform IARC on samples that are available for use. The STS gives HEADSpAcE partners an idea of sample availability at a given time, but when the list is sent to the biorepository, a requested sample may be depleted, in which case the biorepository will inform the requestor that the sample is not available and to select another one.

7. Your contacts

7.1 General queries

Contact Laurene Bouvard, HEADSpAcE@iarc.fr, for general enquiries and admin requirements in particular.

7.2 Recruitment

Contact Shama Virani, viranis@iarc.fr, leader of WP1, for scientific queries in particular recruitment or Sample Tracking System (STS).

Please specify “How to join HEADSpAcE” in your email subject.

8. Abbreviations

ADA	Asset Donation Agreement
CA	Consortium Agreement
DMTA	Data and Material Transfer Agreement
DoH	Declaration of Honour
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
ID	Identifier
IRB	Institutional Review Board (ethics)
LEAR	Legal Entity Authorised Representative (EU role)
PFSIGN	Project Financial Signatory (EU role)
PLSIGN	Project Legal signatory (EU role)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

STS	Sample Tracking System
WP	WorkPackage