

Sjögren's UK recent research grants and research review committee members:

2026 Grant – applications open until 31 July 2026

Committee members: Professor David Isenberg (Chair), Annabel Dawson, Professor Anne Field, Dr Peter Glennon, Professor Stephen Kaye, Catherine Porter, Dr Elizabeth Price, Dr Md Yuzaiful Md Yusof.

2025 Grant awarded £49,659 to Dr Melanie Sloan

Department of medicine, UEA (dual role with Cambridge department of public health)

Project title: *"I don't think they take Sjögren's seriously"*: Investigating Disparities in the Diagnosis, Care, and Lived Experience of Sjögren's Disease Patients.

Lay project title: Why do people with Sjögren's get less support than other diseases? A Study of Inequality in Diagnosis, Care, and Everyday Life.

Plain English lay summary of research

Sjögren's is an incurable autoimmune disease that causes many symptoms like fatigue dryness, pain, and brain fog. Many people, especially women, spend years trying to get a diagnosis, often being told their symptoms are "in their head" or blamed on stress or hormones. This project will look at the experiences of people with Sjögren's to understand why care is often poor and inconsistent. We'll compare the experiences and views of people with Sjögren's to those with other autoimmune diseases, and look closely at whether personal characteristics like ethnicity, income, or gender make a difference in how they are treated. We'll also ask: Who gets diagnosed quickly? Who feels listened to/ignored by doctors? Our findings will help researchers, doctors, and charities better understand the unmet needs of people with Sjögren's and how to change things for the better. By sharing this research widely, we hope to improve diagnosis, care, and future research into new treatments.

Committee members: Professor Anne Field (Chair), Annabel Dawson, Dr Peter Glennon, Catherine Porter, Dr Elizabeth Price, Dr Md Yuzaiful Md Yusof.

2024 Grant awarded £29,906 to Professor Ben Fisher

Institute of Inflammation and Ageing, University of Birmingham

Project title: Increasing confidence in RANKL as a therapeutic target in Sjogren's Syndrome.

Lay project title: Can we gain further confidence that blocking a protein known as RANKL may be worth testing in patients with Sjögren's syndrome?

Plain English lay summary of research

Sjögren's syndrome (SjS) is a disease in which the body's own immune system causes inflammation in moisture producing glands. Saliva-producing glands in SjS display a pattern of organised inflammation and we think that a protein called RANKL may have an important role in causing this. We found that patients

with SjS have high levels of RANKL protein in saliva and blocking RANKL in mice can reduce this pattern of inflammation in saliva-producing glands. We wish to understand, firstly, the number and location of RANKL-producing cells in stored salivary gland biopsy tissue from patients with SjS. We will do this by staining tissue with a specific marker for RANKL. Secondly, we want to understand

the effects of blocking RANKL on inflammation by studying human salivary gland tissue in the laboratory. Together, these results will help us determine if, and how, a clinical trial of medicine to block RANKL should be conducted.

Committee members: Dr Monica Gupta (Chair), Dr Sara Carty, Annabel Dawson, Dr Peter Glennon, Dr Kate Hackett, Dr Elizabeth Price.