

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Sarit Sekhar Pattanaik, to endorse his candidature for the Sun Pharma Science Foundation: Clinical Research Fellowships, 2024.

Dr Sarit is currently working as Assistant Professor with me in the Department of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, SCB Medical College and Hospital. I have known him for the last 15 years, as an undergraduate student when he showed his keenness towards immunology and for clinical research. He worked on a project related severe malaria, a major public health problem in Odisha and published a seminal paper in *Acta Tropica*. While under my mentorship, he was awarded the undergraduate research fellowship by Indian Rheumatology Association (IRA) in 2010 for his work on TLR polymorphism in Systemic onset Juvenile idiopathic arthritis which was accepted for presentation in the National Conference of IRA. He was my post-graduate in Internal Medicine at SCB, excelled in academics and published many relevant clinical articles on systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), a life-threatening autoimmune disease affecting young females. His work on important susceptibility genes in SLE, relevant to our region, due to parasitic infections which are considered evolutionary pressure for driving protective mutations for these infections but in turn increases the susceptibility for autoimmune diseases. He presented this work at the prestigious American College of Rheumatology Conference (ACR), San Francisco in 2015, for which he was awarded with DST-SERB International travel grant. His Post-Graduate dissertation on the role of cytokines in SLE was awarded the Dr. Vigthalarao Nadgouda Best All India Annual MD thesis award in 2016, by the Association of Physicians of India. Furthermore, as a PG trainee he has the distinction of qualifying for the highly competitive finals of three consecutive national rheumatology quiz, organized by the Indian Rheumatology Association in different years.

He completed post-doctoral specialization (DM) in Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology at Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI), Lucknow. During his tenure there he acquired expertise in laboratory immunology and musculoskeletal ultrasound. His seminal paper on causes of mortality in SLE, highlighted infection, particularly TB and associated high disease activity as a major cause of death in Indian SLE patients. Besides, he published other important papers which were presented in both national and international platforms. After his tenure at SGPGI, he joined SCB Medical College in 2020 as Assistant Professor. He is an excellent teacher guiding post graduate and post-doctoral students. He has a passion for research and is currently working on understanding the pathogenesis of SLE and other autoimmune diseases in a background of high burden of infectious diseases. He was recently awarded the prestigious ACR – APLAR travel fellowship, for presenting his novel work at the American College of Rheumatology, 2023 held at San Diego. As part of the fellowship's objectives, he spent time as an observer at the National Institute of Health, US and University of California Los Angeles, interacting with the pioneers in the field of autoimmunity. He has great clinical acumen and aptitude for translational research: qualities that are desired from a young scientist. I am confident that his research ability will flourish in the coming

days and help in improving the quality of life of patients living with chronic and incurable rheumatic disorder.