

World Cancer Research Fund International

Grant Programmes

Conflicts of Interest Policy

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Conflicts of Interest for Expert Review

The WCRF International conflict of interest (COI) policy was developed to meet the best practice recommendations of the **Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)** on the expert review process of our grant calls, both for Panel Members and external peer reviewers.

Panel members

Panel members have a conflict of interest (with an application), and will therefore not review it or be present when it is discussed, if:

- The Panel member is in any way involved with the study (e.g. as a co-applicant or collaborator, or in any other way that could lead to a conflict of interest)
- The Panel member stands to benefit financially from the awarding of a grant to that application
- The applicant is based at the same department as the Panel member
- The Panel member is likely to become a co-author on any paper generated from that study or has co-authored with any of the applicants in the past three years where there are less than 10 authors
- The applicant is closely associated with the Panel member or has a personal relationship with the applicant
- The Panel members personally feel s/he has a COI with any particular application

Please do not review any application if you identified a conflict of interest (if you are involved in the application in any way, including being a probable co-author on any future publications from the study) or if you feel you have a conflict of interest in any other way.

Please note that Panel members can apply to the Regular Grant Programme. They do not get involved in the review of their own application, but they are responsible for assessing all the other applications in that grant cycle that they do not have a COI with. The Chair is also allowed to apply for grants, but if s/he applies, s/he will not be able to attend the Panel meetings for that grant cycle, and the Co-Chair will take up chairing duties instead.

Allowing Panel members and the Chair to apply is a pragmatic decision that takes into consideration the fact that they might commit a number of years to the Panel, and it would be a disincentive to not allow them to apply for funding. Panel members implicitly (and explicitly via the acceptance letter they sign and this Grant Panel Handbook) agree to review grant applications fairly.

External peer reviewers

The exclusion criteria for external peer reviewers follow the same general principles as that of the Panel COI criteria. Thus, applicants, co-applicants or collaborators in an application should not review other applications from the same grant cycle.

WCRF International will check before contacting the reviewer whether the suggested peer reviewer is based at the same institution as the applicant or involved with the study (e.g. as a co-applicant or collaborator). WCRF International will also make every effort to determine whether the suggested peer reviewer is involved with any other application in that particular grant cycle. Nevertheless, to help highlight any potential COI, the peer review form will have the following questions at the beginning:

Conflict of interest:

Thank you for agreeing to review this application to the WCRF International Grant cycle.

To ensure the fairness of the review, please consider whether you might have a COI with the application:

- Are you in any way involved with this application (e.g. as a co-applicant or collaborator in the study)?
- Are you involved with any other application in the current WCRF International Grant cycles?
- Are you based at the same institution as the Principal Investigator?

If you feel that you might have a COI with a particular application, please let us know.

Additional Conflicts of Interest for Panel Members

Please complete this declaration, sign and return to the Research Funding Team (research@wcrf.org).

At the core of our work is the principle that any external relationship or activity should not undermine the judgement of applications to, or the overall reputation of WCRF International's Grant Programmes. Since the judgement of these applications influences the international research agenda, it is crucial that quality and independence are maintained to the highest standards. The Chair, Members of the Panel (scientific and lay) should not have any conflicting interests which could jeopardise the independence of our Grant Programmes. Any potential conflicting interests should be disclosed to the Research Funding team.

Definition

A conflict of interest arises in circumstances where there is potential for a secondary interest to unduly influence either the independence or objectivity of professional judgement or actions regarding a primary interest. The existence of conflict of interest in all its forms does not necessarily mean that improper action has occurred, but rather that there is a risk of improper action occurring. Conflict of interest is not only financial but can also take other forms. Conflict of interest also includes perceived conflict of interest or where it may be reasonably perceived to unduly influence.

Conflicts of interest considered particularly high risk are those relating to the tobacco and alcohol industries. Food and drink manufacturers (especially of ultra-processed foods/breast milk substitutes) could also be considered high risk, if individuals are in receipt of substantive research funding from such sources.

Personal interests

A personal interest involves payment to an individual personally. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Consultancies: any employment, consultancy, directorship, position in or work for industry, or for any other type of organisation whose interests may or may be seen to conflict with those of WCRF International which attracts regular or occasional payments in cash or kind.
- Fee-paid work: any work commissioned by industry or other organisation (as above) for which the member is paid in cash or kind.
- Shareholdings: any shareholding in or other beneficial interest in industrial shares. This does not include shareholdings through unit trusts or similar arrangements where the member has no influence on financial management.

Non-personal interests

A non-personal interest involves payment which benefits an institution or department for which an individual is responsible but is not received personally. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Fellowships: the holding of a fellowship endowed by industry.
- Support by industry: any payment, other support or sponsorship by industry which does not convey any pecuniary or material benefit to a member personally, but which does benefit his or her position or department. E.g., grant from a company for the running of a unit or department for which an individual is responsible; a grant or fellowship or other payment to sponsor a post or a member of staff in the unit for which the individual is responsible (not including financial assistance for students); the commissioning of research or other work by, or advice from, staff who work in a unit for which an individual is responsible.

Declaration and publication of interests

All members (The Chair, Members of the Panel, and Patient Representatives) are asked to submit a return of existing personal and non-personal interests to the Research Funding Team (research@wcrf.org). Any personal interest acquired after the initial declaration should similarly be declared. Only the name of the company and the general nature of the interest need be declared; the amount of any salary, fees, shareholding etc. need not be declared.

If you are uncertain as to whether an interest should be declared, guidance should be sought from the Research Funding Team. If you have an interest not specified here which you believe could be seen as influencing your views, you should seek advice on whether it should be declared.

The declared personal and non-personal interests of members may be made public on the WCRF International website.

Confidentiality

All Grant Panel meetings are confidential, and the proceedings and materials of these meetings are for the exclusive use of Grant Panel members and World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) International staff.

WCRF International Science and Research Department staff members handle all communication with any applicants. Telephone enquiries and correspondence from applicants should be referred to the Science and Research Department at WCRF International. There should be no direct communication between Grant Panel members and applicants relating to any of the applications, unless requested by WCRF International. Such requests are generally made to explain or expand upon points raised during the Grant Panel's review of the application.

Please note that failure to maintain confidentiality will undermine the review process of the relevant application and could result in the need to review the application again. In addition, WCRF International might be obliged to dismiss from the Grant Panel any member who does not follow the confidentiality specifications described in the Panel Handbook.

Declaration

Do you have any financial or other potentially conflicting interests with the work you will be doing as a Chair, Member of the Panel, or Patient Representative in the process leading to applications funded by the WCRF network entities? If yes, please fill in the box below.

Personal interests

Name of company/organisation:

Nature of interest:

Non-personal interests

Name of company/organisation:

Nature of interest:

Additional information

Is there anything else that could affect your actual or perceived objectivity or independence, either in panel meetings or as perceived by outsiders?

I declare that the disclosed information is correct and that no other situation of real, potential or apparent conflict of interest is known to me. I undertake to inform the Panel chair at the beginning of each Panel meeting of any change in these circumstances, including if an issue arises during the course of the meeting itself.

Signed:

Please print your name:

Date: