

Conflict of Interest

Definition

A conflict of interest is defined as any financial, personal, professional or institutional interest or connection of any individual which may, if undeclared, expose the Myeloma UK Research Programme and any recommendations open to accusations of bias and inappropriate influence in peer review or assessment, funding recommendations or scientific advice

- The notion of "conflict of interests" does not imply an immoral action. Conflicts may arise out of the facts and not from fraudulent motivations. They do not in themselves inevitably cause harm; it is ambiguity and the possibility for harm that arouse concern.
- Research Advisory Group members or Peer Reviewers are not required to declare all associations they may have outside grant giving functions of Myeloma UK, only those which relate to or could impact (or be perceived to impact) on the research activities of the charity. Individuals should register all relevant interests and should declare any relevant interest when dealing with or discussing a matter to which it is pertinent.
- Relevant interests may include both financial and non-financial interests. The test of relevance is whether the interest might reasonably be thought to affect the way in which an individual discharges their duties. The test is not whether an individual's actions will be influenced by the interest but whether the public might reasonably think that this may be the case. It is up to each individual to decide if a conflict of interest could exist and, if so, to declare the conflict. When deciding on such matters, consideration must be given to how things could appear to others and, in all cases, individuals should err on the side of caution, declaring an interest if there is any possibility that a conflict of interest may exist.
- All Research Advisory Group members must declare Conflicts of Interest on joining the Research Advisory Group and will be asked for an update annually.

Identification and resolution of conflicts of interest.

Potential conflicts of interest highlighted by declarations of interest, including consultancies and appointments, can be resolved by:

- the individual(s) concerned being excluded from the relevant (or entire) decision making discussion.
- restricting access to information to the individual(s) concerned.

Examples of conflicts:

Financial conflict: anyone who has a direct or indirect financial interest with a grant application submitted to Myeloma UK.

Applicant and co-applicant(s) conflict: anyone listed as main applicant or co-applicant on a grant application submitted to Myeloma UK.

Collaborator(s) conflict: anyone listed as a collaborator or having recently collaborated with the listed main applicant and/or co-applicant(s) in a grant application submitted to Myeloma UK

Same institution conflict: anyone working in the same institution as the main applicant or co-applicant(s) listed on a grant application submitted to Myeloma UK at the time of their commitment to the Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel.

Competition conflict: anyone who has competitive interest with a grant application being reviewed in Myeloma UK's Peer Review process that may result in a strong decision bias during the time of his/her commitment to the Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel.

Other conflicts of interests will inevitably arise with individual agenda items. In such a case the conflict must be declared to the Director of Research as soon as it is possible.

Automatic exclusion from participation in funding decisions

Individuals must absent themselves from the relevant part of any meeting where matters concerning a grant proposal with which they are connected are discussed. They may not take part in any decisions taken in relation to such a grant proposal, and under certain circumstances may not receive any papers relating to it.

An individual is deemed to have such a connection when they are:

- the sole applicant
- a joint applicant or a named collaborator
- a relative of one of the grant applicants
- a business partner of one of the applicants
- a member or employee of the same university or institution as one of the grant applicants

Exclusions at Myeloma UK's discretion

Individuals may be excluded from the Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel discussions at the discretion of Myeloma UK when:

- They are a direct competitor of the applicant.

- They have acted as an external referee or served on another Committee in respect of a proposal when it was considered by another funding body.

If an individual becomes aware of any other matter that would reasonably be expected to give rise to or be viewed as a conflict of interest (whether academic, scientific, financial or personal) then they should declare the matter to the Director of Research before the meeting or as soon as the potential conflict becomes apparent at the meeting.

The Director of Research may consult with the Chair and will determine whether the individual should:

- Take a full part in the meeting.
- Be permitted to comment on the application and take part in the discussions but not present the application to the Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel.
- Be permitted to comment on the application and participate in discussions but not take part in the decision at the Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel.
- Absent themselves from the relevant part of the meeting.

The Director of Research will bring to the Chair's attention all relevant information concerning any form of connection between an application and a member of the committee.

Cases of uncertainty

If an individual has any doubt as to the relevance of an interest, they must disclose to the Director of Research before the meeting or, as soon as the potential conflict becomes apparent at the meeting. The Director of Research will consult as necessary and the Chair or the Deputy Chair (where the Chair has conflicts) shall decide by reference to the points above.

Matters other than those concerning funding decisions

Routinely, individuals must absent themselves from the relevant part of any meeting where matters concerning their interests are discussed and may not take part in any decisions taken relevant to such interests.

Discussion of applications outside meetings

Where Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel members feel it necessary to discuss an application prior to the meeting this should be declared to the Chair.

If an individual is approached by an applicant for advice on an application the individual may provide such advice but must disclose this to the Director of

Research. The individual may be excluded from all or part of the meeting at which the application is considered.

Raising concerns about the conflicts of interest of others

An individual who is concerned about another individual's potential or actual conflicts of interest should raise the matter as set out below:

- Issue concerning a Research Advisory Group or convened funding panel members should be raised with the Chair or the Director of Research.
- Issues about Myeloma UK staff should be raised with the Chair.
- Issues about the Chair should be raised with the Board of Trustees.

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