

Challenging genetic disorders



Chronic Granulomatous Disorder Research Trust

Conflicts of Interest Policy for CGD RT Medical Advisory Panel

Background

A primary objective of the CGD Research Trust is to fund medical and scientific research aimed at understanding, treating and curing CGD. When allocating charitable funds for research, the overriding consideration of the CGD Research Trust is the potential benefit for those with CGD.

The CGD Research Trust relies heavily on, and is greatly appreciative of, the goodwill and willingness of those members of the medical and scientific community who give generously of their time to act as advisors and participate in its processes by sitting on its committees.

The CGD Research Trust aims to ensure that it receives expert and appropriate advice in research matters and that it sets an appropriate research strategy that enables the charity to meet its primary objectives. It also aims to ensure that research proposals are assessed objectively, impartially and in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Association of Medical Research Charities, of which it is a member. Advice from and review by an appropriately constituted body is seen as an essential element of this process.

As part of its commitment to impartiality and the integrity of the peer review and advisory processes, the CGD Research Trust has set down a Code of Conduct for the members of advisory panels. The purpose of this code of conduct is to protect and preserve the integrity of both its advisors and its processes.

If the CGD Research Trust has reason to believe that a member of a panel has breached this code of conduct, then he or she may be asked to step down from the committee.

Code of conduct

1. Panel members are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the Charity before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent. Such conflicts of interest may include:

- The individual concerned is the sole applicant on the funding proposal
- The individual is a joint applicant on the proposal
- A relative of the individual is the sole or a joint applicant
- An applicant on the proposal is a business partner of the individual
- An applicant on the proposal is a member or employee of the same institution as the individual concerned.

In such circumstances an individual will be automatically excluded from participation in a funding decision. He or she should absent themselves from the meeting while the proposal concerned is being discussed. He or she will not receive the application itself or any related papers, including the referee reports.

2. A register of interests will be kept up to date and members should declare new interests as they arise to the Charity.
3. In certain situations, an individual may be excluded from discussion of a proposal at the discretion of the Charity. Examples of such situations include:
 - The individual concerned can be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant; i.e. they are currently being funded or are currently applying for funding on a project of a similar nature to the proposal under discussion
 - The individual has acted as an external referee, or on a funding panel/committee in respect of the proposal under discussion at a time when the proposal was being discussed by another funding body.
 - The individual has collaborated or published with the proposal applicant within the past three years.
 - The individual is aware of any other issue that might reasonably be expected to give rise to, or give rise to the perception of, a conflict of interest.

In any of these cases, the particular situation will be discussed by the committee chair and the charity, who will decide on one of the following options:

- The individual is allowed to participate fully in the funding decision
 - The individual is allowed to discuss and vote on the proposal but may not present the proposal to the committee
 - The individual may comment on the proposal but not take part in any funding decisions
 - The individual absents himself from the meeting while the proposal is being discussed
4. Applications, reviews and the identity of reviewers are strictly confidential and should be kept secure and not discussed or disseminated to others outside the committee/panel/Charity.
 5. Chairs and Panel members should not discuss committee deliberations or reviewers' comments with applicants unless specifically directed by the panel Chairman. This should apply to funded grants as well as those that have been rejected.

The following are strictly confidential:

- 5.1 decision making and panel discussions (including the reasons for decisions to fund or not to fund)
- 5.2 the contents of papers and correspondence relating to applications for funds, funding policy and site visits if applicable.
- 5.3 Trust committee members and referees also have a right to expect that their comments will be treated in confidence, by both the Trust's staff and other members of the panel. For that reason:
 - papers must be kept secure and not disseminated to anyone
 - applications must not be discussed with anyone else (including colleagues based at the member's host institution and referees) without prior permission from the Trust
 - no aspect of the deliberations or recommendations regarding any application should be discussed with applicants unless authorised by the Panel Chair. Feedback will be provided as appropriate by Trust staff. Panel members should refuse any requests for information or for an explanation of how a particular decision was reached - all such requests must be referred to the staff of the Trust.
6. Applicants may seek advice from CGD RT staff before applications are submitted. However, a clear condition of applying for a CGD Research Trust grant is that applicants should not approach the Chair or other panel members, either before or after the decision on the application. If applicants approach members of the panel CGD RT staff must be informed of the incident.
7. Any requests for further feedback, beyond that initially sent with the decision letter, and any complaints about the review process should be directed to and handled by CGD RT staff.