Conflicts of interest policy

This policy relates to all members of the scientific research committee of the charity, and includes scientific reviewers as well as the chair, trustees and staff of the charity.

The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising and to protect the charity and those who work for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its committee members might interfere with their ability to work towards the furtherance of the charity’s objectives.

Declaration of interests:

a) Any persons covered by this policy, as defined in paragraph 1a), must declare any disclosable external interest on their appointment to the charity, and annually thereafter. A register of interests will be kept up to date by the charity.

b) Interests which should be disclosed by such individuals include: Equity interests (if worth £10,000 or more, or more than 1% of the total issued capital) in enterprises with involvement in pharmaceuticals, healthcare, biotech or related areas, or in any other enterprise that may have a real or perceived interest in the work of the charity. Consultancies and other external appointments (paid and unpaid), together with details of any remuneration or other benefits arising from these.

c) Panel members (including trustees who serve on panels) should also adhere to the spirit of this document and declare any other interests which they feel may be a source of conflict, or which might be perceived to conflict, with the interests of the charity. This includes interests held by the panel members’ spouse or children.

Code of conduct:

a) As a condition of participation, all members of the scientific research committee members and reviewers agree that documents and correspondence relating to applications for funds and funding are strictly confidential and therefore:

- Should not be discussed with anyone else during review, or either before or after the scientific research committee meeting. No discussion should occur between Board members except during the business of the meeting.
- Feedback to candidates (successful or unsuccessful) will be provided by the Trust alone. Neither member of the scientific research committee nor invited reviewers, under any circumstances, should provide feedback directly to the candidate.
- Applications should not be disseminated
• Any printouts should be kept secure and disposed of securely after the decision has been reached.

b) Should a reviewer or a scientific research committee member have a conflict of interest and/or vested interest (organisational, collaborative, personal or other) in the outcome of a grant application they should declare it and decline the review invitation, or in the case of committee members appropriate actions should be taken as per “Managing conflicts of interests” code below.

c) Reviewers have a right to expect that their comments will be treated in confidence by both the grant scientific committee members and Trust’s staff and other members of the review groups.

d) Grant applicants will receive anonymised feedback from the reviewers

e) While membership of the scientific research committee will be publicly available, the identity of reviewers in relation to specific grants will be kept confidential.

f) If the Trust has reason to believe that a member of the scientific research committee or an invited reviewer has breached this Code of Conduct, then he or she may be asked to step down as a reviewer or committee member.

g) When we inform applicants of the outcome of their applications, we provide anonymous versions of referees' comments, and may also summarise the conclusion reached by the grant scientific committee. Information that might identify the comments of individual members or referees is never revealed.

h) It is our policy to let external referees know the final outcome of applications they have reviewed after we have communicated decisions to applicants. Referees agree to treat all details of applications and their outcomes as confidential.

**Managing conflicts of interests:**

a) Where a member of the scientific research committee is an applicant or co-applicant on a grant application, he or she must declare an interest and withdraw from any consideration of that application. That member will not receive documents pertaining to the application, learn the identity of its referees or receive its referees' reports. He or she must retire from the meeting when the application is assessed. Details of discussion of that application will be deleted from any papers the member receives. This should also apply to trustees who serve as panel members and are applicants in the grant round.

b) Where the chair of the panel is an applicant or co-applicant on a grant application, he or she must declare an interest and should not be involved in that round of meetings.
c) Members of the scientific research committee who could be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant (e.g. they are funded or applying for funding on a similar project to the proposal under discussion) or have collaborated or published with the proposal applicant within the past three years, or work in the same institution, should declare an interest and will be asked to withdraw from the meeting for that application, or may be allowed to stay, but not vote on the application.

Resolution conflicts of interest

a) The Charity recognises that the majority of conflicts or potential conflicts will relate to a particular issue and as such will not present any long term restrictions on an individual’s ability to work for the charity or to sit on its committees.

b) In a small number of cases, major conflicts of interest may arise which compromise an individual’s ability to continue in their position within the charity. Where such a situation relates to a member of the research scientific committee, the matter will be discussed by the chair of the committee. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the committee as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.

c) All members of the scientific research committee are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the committee secretariat before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent.

d) In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the committee Chair, who will decide on a course of action.

e) If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of a funding panel, then he or she should raise the matter with committee Chair, who will decide on a course of action.

d) If a committee member (including serving trustees) is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the committee Chair. They may subsequently be asked by the chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.

Updating the Policy

The Migraine Trust will endeavour to review the policy every two years in consultation with the Board of Trustees.

Policy last updated: 15/02/2016