

## **Macular Society Conflicts of Interest Policy**

### **1. General**

- a. This policy relates to the Research Committee, its Chair and other members.
- b. The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising and to protect the Macular Society and those who work for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its Research Committee members might interfere with their ability to work towards the furtherance of the charity's objectives.

### **2. 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 Macular Society, and declare any changes to these interests at the beginning of every Research Committee meeting. 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 one percent 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. Third party investments (e.g. ISAs) should be held exempt from this.

- Consultancies and other external appointments (paid and unpaid), together with details of any remuneration or other benefits arising from these.
- c. Research Committee members 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 member's spouse or children.

### **3. Discussion of proposals**

- a. Details of applications, meeting papers and related correspondence, and the names of external referees are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with persons outside the review process.
- b. Discussions of a proposal between members of the Research Committee, which occurs outside a committee meeting, should be declared to the Chair.
- c. If a Research Committee member is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the Research Committee Chair and management team. They may subsequently be asked by the Chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.

### **4. Managing conflicts of interests**

- a. Where a Research Committee member has a conflict of interest, he or she must declare it 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.

- b. Where the chair of the Committee is applying for funding they should absent themselves from the whole meeting and not appoint any written reviewers. This should be the case whenever funding is directly attributed to the chair regardless of the type of applicant they are listed as (e.g. lead or joint lead applicant, co-investigator, collaborator etc.). In all applications where funding is linked to the chair, the committee vice-chair should take over the chair's responsibilities for that round.
- c. Should the chair have other conflicts of interest not related to funding (e.g. institutional, co-authorship, personal or professional relationships), they should declare these interests upfront and leave the room for the specific item(s) when they are discussed, as per the requirement for other committee members. The vice-chair should take over for these specific items.

## **5. Resolution of conflicts of interest**

- a. The Macular Society 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 that compromise an individual's ability to continue in their position within the charity. Where such a situation relates to a Research Committee member, the matter will be discussed by the Chair of the Research Committee together with the management team. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the Research Committee as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.
- c. Members of the Research Committee are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to

individual funding decisions to the management team 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 management team. The management team shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and report to the 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 the Research Committee, then he or she should raise the matter with the Chair of the Research Committee.

## **6. Updating the policy**

- a. The Macular Society will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every two years, in consultation with the board of Trustees.