

Leukaemia UK's Expert Review Policy

Overview

Leukaemia UK is committed to an open and transparent process of expert review, which aims to ensure that the research it funds is assessed impartially and objectively. Leukaemia UK is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), and as such adheres to the AMRC principles and guidance on expert review: proportionality, independence, diversity, rotation, impartiality, and transparency. An external independent panel of experts reviews applications for research funding and then makes recommendations for funding to the Charity's Board of Trustees. This independent review of applications is an integral part of the decision-making process. As part of its commitment to the impartiality and integrity of the review process, Leukaemia UK has set down a Code of Conduct concerning how panel members should behave, including declaring vested interests. Leukaemia UK's Code of Conduct is detailed in our Conflicts of Interest Policy.

Expert Review Panels

Leukaemia UK's expert review of funding applications is carried out by members of Leukaemia UK's Expert Review Panels in accordance with approved Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, and Conflicts of Interest Policy. Members of the Expert Review Panels are volunteers and have a three-year fixed term of office that is extendable by a further three years. The charity endeavours to ensure a balanced panel that reflects a fair balance of appropriate knowledge and experience and, where possible, reflects diversity across protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010, as amended. Details of the members of Leukaemia UK's Expert Review Panels are published online at:

<https://www.leukaemiauk.org.uk/board-of-trustees/#scientific-medical-panel>

Expert Review Process

All research funding proposals are reviewed by independent external reviewers comprised of (1) at least five members of the appropriate Leukaemia UK Expert Review Panel, and (2) at least two External Expert Reviewers, and (3) at least one representative from Leukaemia UK's Patient Experience Advisory Panel. Applications are reviewed and scored for the relevance, quality, feasibility, and potential impact of the proposed research, together with an assessment of the applicant and the host institution. Recommendations for funding are decided at a

meeting where a quorum of members are present, including members of Leukaemia UK secretariat as observers.

External Expert Reviewers

Leukaemia UK will seek the expert opinions of at least two External Expert Reviewers for all funding applications. Applicants will be invited to suggest three possible External Expert Reviewers for their application, and Leukaemia's Expert Review Panel members may also suggest suitable External Expert Reviewers. Applicants may also indicate reviewers they do not wish to review their application. Leukaemia UK will independently check that any suggested External Expert Reviewers have no conflict of interest.

Leukaemia UK's secretariat will be responsible for inviting External Expert Reviewers to undertake a written review of an application using a standard form (provided by Leukaemia UK) and within a reasonable timeframe. All External Expert Reviewers will be asked to declare any conflict of interest. External Expert Reviewers' assessments will be made available to members of the appropriate Expert Review Panel as part of the decision-making process for each funding round.

An External Expert Reviewer's comments may also be shared with an applicant and, if so, will be anonymised.

Conflict of Interest

Leukaemia UK's commitment to the impartiality and transparency of the expert review process is detailed in our Conflicts of Interest Policy. All members of the Expert Review Panels who review funding applications must declare any issues (whether academic, scientific, financial, business, personal or otherwise) that might give rise to any conflict of interest. Should any reviewer have a vested interest in a funding application they must declare it. The reviewer must not assess the application or take part in any discussions with regard to a funding decision.

Animal Research

Leukaemia will fund proposals that include research with animals only where there is no alternative and where they fully comply with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

The Expert Review Panels will give careful consideration, during expert review, only to proposals that support the guiding principles of the 3Rs (refine, reduce and replace) for the ethical use of animals in research.

Approval by the Board of Trustees

The Expert Review Panel members independently review all funding applications, and a decision meeting at which a quorum of ERP members is present makes recommendations for funding to Leukaemia UK's Board of Trustees for approval. The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for all funding-making decisions and reserve the right to accept or reject the ERP's recommendations. Following approval by the Board of Trustees the successful and unsuccessful applicants are informed.

Updating the policy

Leukaemia UK will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every two years in consultation with the Board of Trustees that approves the policy.

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