



Advancing science; empowering parents; defeating neuroblastoma.

Research Funding

Conflict of Interest Policy

This Conflict of Interest Policy (COI) describes the steps taken by Solving Kids' Cancer (Europe) and its Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure transparency in the grant award process.

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Version Control

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1. Overview

- a. This policy relates to the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of Solving Kids' Cancer, its Board of Trustees and Officers of the charity, as well as any other expert panel convened by the SAB for the purposes of reviewing funding applications received by the charity.
- b. The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising and to protect Solving Kids' Cancer, those who work for it, and its Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its Board members might interfere with their impartiality and ability to work towards the furtherance of the charity's objectives.

2. Declaration of Interests

- a. Members of the SAB, its Board of Trustees and Officers of the charity, 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:
 - i. Direct shareholdings 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 Solving Kids' Cancer. Third party investments (e.g. ISAs) should be held exempt from this.
 - ii. Consultancies and other external appointments (paid and unpaid), that may have a real or perceived interest in the work of Solving Kids' Cancer, and the nature of any financial arrangements i.e. expenses bursary, retainer, remuneration for work undertaken. Where payment is for services rendered, the most recent **date** of any paid work should be disclosed.
- 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 Solving Kids' Cancer. This includes interests held by the panel members' 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. Substantive discussions regarding details of proposals between members of the SAB which occur outside a committee meeting should be declared to the Chair of the SAB.
- c. If a SAB member (including serving trustees or an appointed layperson or Officer of the charity) is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the SAB Chair and secretariat. If their input is deemed material in developing the proposal they may subsequently be asked by the

Chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.

4. Managing Conflicts of Interest

- a. Where a SAB member 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 reviewers or receive the scorecards from those reviewers. 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 SAB has a current or previous interest in a grant application, he or she must declare an interest and should not be involved in that round of meetings. The Vice-Chair will chair the meeting to prevent any undue influence.
- c. Where SAB members:
 - i. 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);
 - ii. have collaborated with the proposal applicant within the past three years;
 - iii. are a co-applicant in any other current (or recent) funding applications;
 - iv. work in the same institution as the applicant;a decision will be taken by Solving Kids' Cancer in conjunction with the SAB Chair on whether they may be allowed to stay but not vote, or may be permitted to play a full role including voting on the application, or in extreme circumstances where their input could be perceived as not being wholly objective and impartial they may be asked to withdraw from the meeting for that application. Such a decision shall be made in accordance with best-practice guidelines; whilst applying special consideration to any practical implications resulting from the limited size of the neuroblastoma research community, and assessing the precise nature of the conflict.
- d. Members of the SAB are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the Chair or SAB secretariat before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent.
- e. If a SAB member is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of the panel, then he or she should raise the matter with the Chair.

Convening Non-Conflicted Expert Peer Review Panels

- f. Peer review experts will be drawn from the neuroblastoma community where possible, selected by the Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the SAB on the basis that they can provide a non-conflicted review of the application. Where the invited expert knows of, or becomes aware of, the existence of a conflict they must make this known to the Chair and secretariat of the SAB immediately.
- g. Where necessary, and in order to avoid conflicts of interest arising, experts outside of the neuroblastoma community may be invited to review applications providing they are familiar with the technologies and/or therapies described in the application.

5. Resolution of Conflicts of Interest

- a. Solving Kids' Cancer 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 SAB.
- b. In a very 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 SAB, the matter will be discussed by the Chair of the SAB together with an Officer of Solving Kids' Cancer. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the SAB as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.
- c. Members of the SAB are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the SAB 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 SAB secretariat. The secretariat shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and with 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 SAB, then he or she should raise the matter with the Chair of the SAB.
- f. Any steps taken to resolve a conflict of interest, either in advance of or during a meeting of the SAB, will be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

6. Updating the Policy

- a. Solving Kids' Cancer will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every two years, in consultation with the SAB Chair and with the approval of the Board of Trustees.