



## **SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- a) As part of its commitment to impartiality and to the integrity of the peer review process, Target Ovarian Cancer has established a Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality Policy. This policy relates to the Scientific Advisory Board – its Chair and members – and to other funding panels and committees of the Charity.
- b) The purpose of this policy is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising and to protect Target Ovarian Cancer 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.
- c) This policy is based on the standard conflicts of interest policy of the Association of Medical Research Charities [AMRC].

### **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

- a) Any persons covered by this policy, as defined in paragraph 1a) above, must declare any disclosable external interest on their appointment to Target Ovarian Cancer, and annually thereafter. A register of interests will be kept up to date by Target Ovarian Cancer.
- b) Interests which should be disclosed to the Board of Trustees of Target Ovarian Cancer 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 Target Ovarian Cancer
  - Consultancies and other external appointments (paid and unpaid)

- c) The individual should adhere, as far as possible, to the spirit of this document and in so doing should declare any other interests which the individual feels may be a source of conflict, or which might be perceived to conflict, with the interests of Target Ovarian Cancer.
- d) The requirement to disclose these interests also extends to any interests of a similar nature held by an individual's spouse or minor children. In the case of adult children, the individual must declare any interests that they may hold to the extent that he or she is aware of them.

### **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 Scientific Advisory Board or any other funding committee which occur outside a meeting should be declared to the Chair of that Board or committee.
- c) If a Board/committee member is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application then he or she may provide advice but must report this to the Board/committee Chair and Research team at Target Ovarian Cancer. They may subsequently be asked by the Chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.
- d) If the advice sought by an applicant is on administrative grounds or to seek information on the status of their proposal, the Board/committee member should refer the applicant to the Research team of Target Ovarian Cancer.

### **4. RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

- a) Target Ovarian Cancer recognises that the majority of conflicts arising 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 with their position in the Charity. Where such a situation relates to a member of the Board/committee, the matter will be discussed by the Chair together with a Board/committee staff member or secretary. In cases where agreement

cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the Board/committee as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.

c) Members of the Board/committee are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the Secretariat before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict of interest becomes apparent. The Chair will then make a decision, having regards to paragraphs d) and e) below.

d) Automatic exclusion from participation in a funding decision

An individual should be automatically excluded from participation in a funding decision in cases where that individual has a direct interest in the funding proposal under discussion. A direct interest applies to any of the following situations:

- The individual concerned is the sole applicant on the funding proposal
- The individual is a joint applicant on the funding proposal
- A relative<sup>1</sup> of the individual is the sole or 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<sup>2</sup>

Where an individual is excluded from a funding decision on this basis, he or she should absent themselves from the meeting while the proposal concerned is being discussed. He or she should not receive the application itself or any related papers, including the referee reports.

e) Exclusion at Target Ovarian Cancer's discretion

In certain situations, an individual may be excluded from discussion of a proposal at the discretion of Target Ovarian Cancer. Examples of such situations include:

- The individual concerned can be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant ie they are currently being funded or are currently applying for funding on a project of a similar nature to the proposal under discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Relative' includes but is not limited to a spouse (current or past), children, siblings and parents

<sup>2</sup> Federated institutions eg University of Wales or University of London should not be regarded as a single institution

- 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 proposed 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 Board/committee Chair and secretariat, 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 Board/committee
- The individual may comment on the proposal but not take part in any funding decisions
- The individual absents him/herself from the meeting while the proposal is being discussed.

If an agreement cannot be reached between the Board/committee Chair and the secretariat, the individual must absent him/herself from proceedings while the proposal is being discussed.

- f) In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the secretariat who will discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and report to the Chair, who will make a decision with regard to the provisions of paragraphs d) and e) above.
- g) If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of the Board/committee, then he or she should raise the matter with the Chair of the Board/committee.