

Child and Adolescent Cancer Pain

Guidance for Peer Review

- Launchpad Grants
- Research Grants

Overview

This document guides you through the Medical Research Foundation's peer review process for the Child and Adolescent Cancer Pain Launchpad Grants and Research Grants. If you have any question or concerns regarding the peer review process please contact the Research Team, at research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk or 020 7395 2420.

Background to the Funders

The [Medical Research Foundation](#) is an independent charitable foundation. Formed by the Medical Research Council (MRC), we grow and nurture people and ideas wherever we see research opportunities with great potential.

Our research projects, including this research on cancer pain, are only able to take place as a result of the support of our generous donors.

Importance of Peer Review

Peer review ensures proposals for research funding are scrutinised by independent scientific experts who specialise in the areas of science covered in the proposal to assess, for example, the viability, quality, cost-effectiveness and impact of the science concerned.

External peer reviewers are experts in the field of research proposed in the application.

Expert review panels assess proposals, drawing on the external peer reviewers' comments and scores to make funding decisions. Panel members are high calibre, committed senior scientists at professor level or equivalent, based in a leading UK or world renowned research institute, university or biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry, who have broad experience of cutting edge research.

The objectives of peer review are to:

- Identify the best research addressing the most important and urgent questions
- Obtain value-for-money and ensure effective and efficient use of resources
- Identify the best scientists with the highest potential, working in the best environments.

There is an implicit contract between the applicant, the Medical Research Foundation and the reviewer. Effective review requires the commitment of all three. The Foundation outlines clear aims and assessment criteria for each of its schemes and calls. Proposals should fall within the criteria and explain clearly and comprehensively how they meet it.

Competition Background

The Medical Research Foundation is inviting applications from researchers at all levels of seniority who are seeking to progress the field. The grant aims to support research that will increase understanding of the mechanisms underpinning child and adolescent cancer pain, improve diagnosis and treatment, and/or impact on future outcomes.

The Medical Research Foundation wishes to support collaborative and multi-professional research as appropriate, whereby researchers across the full spectrum in the field will work collaboratively. We particularly encourage applications that are led by multi-professional partnerships, i.e., bringing together basic scientists, clinicians, and allied health professionals.

Pain is one of the main symptoms reported by children suffering from cancer. To understand this pain, we

need to move away from adult-focussed research and the common misconception that children feel pain like adults. Improvements in the care of children with pain will only occur if they are informed by a scientific biological understanding of the developmental features of pain perception at this vulnerable stage of life. To move this field forward, we need to improve our fundamental knowledge of cancer pain processes in children and young adults up to the age of 25.

Research areas could include, but are not limited to:

- understanding of the biological mechanisms involved in child and adolescent cancer pain
- the development of treatment approaches for child and adolescent cancer pain
- understanding and reducing the impact of child and adolescent cancer pain on health and wellbeing

Please note, this guidance covers both Launchpad Grants AND Research Grants within this call. If you are reviewing applications from both types of grants, please note the different guidance highlighted in bold in the 'Competition Background', 'Funding Available', "Reviewer Assessment" and "Scoring Matrix" sections.

Launchpad Grant applications within the broad field of child and adolescent cancer pain research are welcomed from **early and mid-career researchers that wish to lead on research and progress ideas and concepts that will allow them to strengthen their careers.**

Research Grant applications within the broad field of child and adolescent cancer pain research are welcomed from **established researchers in adjacent fields of cancer and adult pain who wish to apply their skills and knowledge to young people's pain.**

For the purposes of this funding call, research can address cancer pain in children, adolescents and young adults up to the age of 25. Research areas could include, but are not limited to:

- understanding of the biological mechanisms involved in child and adolescent cancer pain
- the development of treatment approaches for child and adolescent cancer pain
- understanding and reducing the impact of child and adolescent cancer pain on health and well-being

To address these areas of research, the Medical Research Foundation recognises the need for interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborations in cancer pain research and particular welcome applications to this scheme that include such partnerships.

Funding Available

Launchpad grant applicants may apply for a fellowship of **up to £100,000 to support their research, over a maximum of a 2-year period.**

Research grant applicants may apply for a fellowship of **up to £300,000 to support their research, over a maximum of a 3-year period.**

There will be a total of £950,000 available in this competition, which will be split flexibly between the Launchpad Grants and Research Grants.

Integrity of Reviews: Declarations of Interest

Integrity between the applicant and reviewer is essential as is the relationship between the Medical Research Foundation, applicant and reviewer. Reviewers are asked to identify any possible **conflicts of interest** before they begin reviewing an application and to decline to review the application and state the reason why so this can be recorded.

Confidentiality

The proposal and any associated papers have been forwarded 'in confidence'. When undertaking to review a proposal, a reviewer commits to keeping all information confidential and never to use, retain or copy the information in the proposal. Reviewers must not make use of the research designs or research findings from a proposal under review and should not allow others to do so.

Reviewers accept and acknowledge that any comments submitted to the Medical Research Foundation may be provided to the applicant, on a confidential basis and in anonymised form, to allow an applicant to respond to issues raised as part of the peer review process and to benefit future proposals. Reviewers should be careful not to include information in their review which compromises their anonymity. Applicants are also required to maintain a similar duty of confidence as it is recognised that reviewers may, from time to time refer to ongoing research, either their own or other researchers for the purposes of comparison.

Reviewer Assessment: Evaluation Criteria

The proposal should be considered against the following four core criteria:

1. **Importance:** How important are the questions, or gaps in knowledge, that are being addressed?
2. **Scientific potential:** What are the prospects for good scientific progress? What is the potential for future research and impact?
3. **Career development:**
 - *For Launchpad Grants:* Has the applicant demonstrated the development of their own distinct research ideas? To what extent will the proposal contribute towards the career progression of the applicant, and making them an independent researcher in future?
 - *For Research Grants:* Has the applicant demonstrated the potential for research leadership, within their own environment and within the field more broadly? To what extent will the proposal contribute towards the career progression of the applicant?
4. **Resources requested:** Are the funds requested essential for the work, and do the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested? What is the likelihood of successful delivery?

Applicants should be assessed in line with the expectations for their career stage.

Reviewers should also identify any ethical issues or risks to human participants that need further attention.

Reviewer Assessment Form

Reviewers are asked to complete a reviewer assessment form using the headings below. The questions under each heading are provided as a guide and it is not necessary to answer each one.

Detail assessment of proposed programme and applicant

- Overall, what is the quality of the proposal?
- How significant is the proposed study in terms of its potential impact?
- How good is the prospect for scientific advance?
- To what extent will the proposed study extend the base of knowledge?
- Is the proposal realistic in its timeframes and resources?
- How convincing and coherent is the overall proposed approach? Is the methodology appropriate?
- How original or innovative is the proposal?
- Do the applicants (the lead applicant and those involved in the project) have the expertise and skill-set

to carry out the proposed study?

- Is the applicant's proposed time commitment to the work appropriate and sufficient?
- Are the applicants' track record and achievements to date good for their career stage?
- *Launchpad Grants*: Is the proposal likely to provide the basis for a strong future research application?

Applicants' wider contribution

- If appropriate, have the applicants made a contribution to the research field, outside of their publication record?
- If appropriate, have the applicants contributed to the development of others?
- If appropriate, have the applicants contributed to the wider research community and culture?
- How does the proposal contribute to the wider research community?
- Does the proposal contribute to broader society (what is its potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact)?

Environment and collaborators

- Is the proposed environment(s) suitable and does it have the variety of expertise and disciplines to support the research?
- Has the host institution(s) demonstrated a clear commitment to the proposed research for the duration of the grant?
- Are any collaborators well chosen?
- Does the environment provide appropriate opportunities for career development of personnel supported on the grant?
- Are there any dependencies on other organisations or funding of which Medical Research Foundation should be made aware?

Value for money

- Does the study represent good value for money in respect of the resources being requested from the Medical Research Foundation?
- Are the proposed resources fully justified in terms of the proposed science?
- Will the expected benefits of the research justify its cost to the Medical Research Foundation?
- Where there is a request to fund personal salaries are the requests in each case reasonable?

Ethics and other implications

- Is the work ethically acceptable?
- Where applicable, is the use of animals and human participants / tissue appropriate and in line with the Medical Research Foundation guidelines?
- Are the ethical review and research governance arrangements clear and acceptable?
- Are there any other implications which could put the Medical Research Foundation, participants in the research, or the applicant at risk?
- Are there any risks that the Medical Research Foundation should be taking into account when deciding whether to fund this research?

Overall comment

- Overall, what is the quality of the proposal?
- How significant is the proposed study in terms of its potential impact?
- To what extent will the proposed study extend the base of knowledge?

Reviewer Assessment: Scoring

Reviewers are asked to score the proposal using the scoring ranges below.. First decide whether the proposal is excellent, good, potentially good or unacceptable. Then use the descriptions within the relevant band to select a score that reflects the overall summary, using whole numbers only. Reviewers should ensure their comments justify the score awarded. Reviewer's scores will be taken into consideration by the Expert Review Panel.

6	Exceptional. Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance
5	Excellent. Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance
4	Very High Quality. Internationally competitive in parts
3	High Quality
2	Good Quality
1	Poor Quality
0	Ineligible for funding

Further Guidance

If you have any question or concerns regarding the peer review process please contact research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk or **020 7395 2410**.

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