**MND Research Australia**

**Conflicts of Interest Policy**

**Statement**

A conflict of interest (CoI) refers to potentially competing obligations that may appear to influence an individual’s professional actions. CoIs may be financial, personal or organisational. A CoI does not imply inappropriate motivation or misconduct on the part of an individual. They are common in research and it is important they are disclosed and dealt with appropriately. A CoI is a serious issue because it can compromise an individual as well as the activities of an organisation. CoIs have the potential to compromise decisions that should be made impartially and could undermine community trust in research.

Both perceived and actual conflicts of interest should be identified. A perception that a COI exists can be as serious as an actual conflict, raising concerns about the integrity of individuals or the management practices of the organisation. For this reason, the possibility of a perceived CoI must be treated as though the conflict exists.

Examples of CoIs are:

* Involvement with the application under review through
  1. Collaborations;
  2. Professional relationships, social relationships or interests;
  3. Teaching or supervisory relationships;
  4. Financial relationships or interests.

**Procedures and Responsibilities**

Researchers frequently have a CoI that cannot be avoided. Expert advice is required for decision-making processes and thus experts may have some link to the matter under consideration. Individual researchers will be conflicted from time to time and should be ready to acknowledge the conflict and make disclosures as appropriate. Such disclosure will enable MNDRA to determine whether it is appropriate to involve an individual in the review process in relation to a particular application.

Prior to the grant applications, MNDRA’s Executive Director Research shall ask Research Committee members to declare any potential CoIs. Should any potential CoI arise at any time during the grants review process, it is the duty of Research Committee members to declare a conflict at the first available opportunity.

At the Grants Allocation Meeting, it is the responsibility of the Research Committee Chair to decide whether disclosure of interests is sufficient or if it is appropriate an individual with a CoI hears discussion without contributing or is excluded from discussion and/or the decision-making process.

Preferably, when an individual has a CoI in relation to a matter under review, or could be seen to have a potential CoI, that individual should withdraw from any discussions, verbal and/or written. The absence of the individual concerned should be recorded in the minutes and documented in the Research Committee CoI Register.

**Review Period**

This policy has been approved by the MND Australia Board and will be reviewed biannually.

Revised August 2022