

Tourettes Action

Conflict of Interest Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising, having an open way of managing them if they do, and to protect Tourettes Action (TA) and those who work for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of those defined as associated with TA might interfere with their ability to work towards the furtherance of TA's objectives.

Application of the policy

The policy shall apply to all trustees and board members of TA, chairs and members of the Research Subcommittee (RSC) and the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and others acting in any capacity for or on behalf of TA. Throughout the policy these shall be referred to as relevant persons.

Declaration of interests

Any relevant person must declare any disclosable external interest on their appointment to TA, and annually thereafter. A register of interests will be kept up to date by the Chief Executive. This includes interests held by partners and family members of relevant persons.

Definition of Interests

A *direct financial interest* arises where a relevant person, as described above, their partner or nominee, advisor, family member or close friend, has a financial interest in a contract or proposed contract whether to their advantage or disadvantage, in which TA is involved.

An *indirect financial interest* may arise where a relevant person, as described above, holds securities or shares in a company that may have a real or perceived interest in the work of TA, which exceed £5,000 or 1/100th of the nominal issued share capital of a company which has a direct financial interest, whichever is the lesser amount. In particular enterprises with involvement in pharmaceuticals, healthcare, biotech or related areas.

A non-financial interest may occur when a relevant person, as described above, their partner or nominee, advisor, family member or close friend, has membership or association in a company, society, club or other body, trade union or voluntary body, or is employed by another person or company which has direct financial interests in any matter which is the subject of discussions/negotiations with TA.

Consultancies and other external appointments (paid and unpaid), together with details of any remuneration or other benefits arising from these should also be declared.

Registering Gifts and Hospitality

TA also requires relevant persons, as described above, to register any gifts and hospitality worth £25 or more with the Chief Executive.

Any gifts and hospitality must be registered with the Chief Executive within 28 days of receiving them.

You must declare any gifts and hospitality at any meeting at which you are present, where a relevant matter is being considered.

Managing conflicts of interests in grant applications

Where a SAB member is an applicant or co-applicant on a grant application, they 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 referees or receive its referees' reports. They 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.

Where the chair of the RSC, SAB or Board is an applicant or co-applicant on a grant application, they must declare an interest and should not be involved in that round of meetings. A vice chair will chair the meeting to prevent any undue influence.

Board or committee members who could be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant or have collaborated or published with the proposal applicant within the last three years, or work in the same institution, should declare an interest and may be asked to withdraw from the meeting for that application, or may be allowed to stay, but not vote on the application.

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.

Discussions of a proposal between members which occur outside a meeting should be declared to the chair of the SAB.

If a SAB or main board member is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application, they may provide advice, but must report this to the committee chair and TA research manager. They may subsequently be asked by the chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned.

Resolution of conflicts of interest

TA 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 committees.

In a small number of cases, major conflicts of interest may arise which compromise an individual's ability to continue in their position within TA. Where such a situation relates to a member of the RSC, SAB or main Board, the matter will be discussed by the chair of the committee or board together with a committee staff member or TA research manager. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the committee or board as a whole, whose decision should be taken as final.

Members of the RSC, SAB and Board are expected to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the TA research manager before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent.

In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the TA research manager. The TA research manager shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and report to the Chair, who will decide on a course of action.

If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of the RSC, SAB or Board, then they should raise the matter with the chair of the panel.

Reviewing the policy

The charity will endeavour to review this policy, if necessary, every two years, in consultation with the board of Trustees.