Research Funding Strategy

Introduction

Medical Research Scotland is an independent comprehensive charity funder of medical research in Scotland. Originally established as the Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust (SHERT) by Act of Parliament in 1953, it was a non-departmental public body with charitable status. It became a fully independent charity in November 2005 and since April 2006 has operated under the name of Medical Research Scotland. (For full information on the historical background, enabling legislation, operational structures and procedures, see: www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/about.htm).

The endowment funds of Medical Research Scotland are administered by a body of Trustees who receive no fee or remuneration for their services, supported by a number of professional advisers, investment managers and auditors. The day-to-day administration of the charity is the responsibility of the Trust Secretaries.

The Medical Research Scotland Trustees are only empowered to provide support for research from income received from the endowment funds.

The Trust’s Research Funding Strategy is drawn up in light of the currently prevailing medical, educational, research and commercial environment in Scotland and mindful of the terms and restrictions of its constitutive legislation.

Medical Research Scotland supporting research

(Why we support research)

Medical Research Scotland aims to improve health standards by funding research of the highest quality into the cause, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of all forms of illness and genetic disorders, and into the advancement of medical technology.

Its objectives are to:

- make grants to promote medical research in Scotland;
- develop and exploit ideas and exploit intellectual property;
- engage in fundraising activities for the purposes of the Trust;
- receive, hold and manage endowments, donations and bequests for the above purposes.

Medical Research Scotland fulfils its objectives by supporting and encouraging scientists to establish careers in medical research in Scotland.

Following a major strategic review (2009-10), the Trustees have refocused the Trust’s funding streams to ensure that it continues to support individuals establishing themselves in a career in medical research in Scotland. It now provides a series of ’stepping stones’ to an established career in medical research, from the earliest stage at undergraduate level through postgraduate to supporting those wishing to return to active research. The intention remains to make a positive difference to the research careers of those whom it supports, while also helping to strengthen Scotland's medical research base.

Research eligible for support from Medical Research Scotland

(What type of research we will support)

Medical Research Scotland is committed to supporting only the highest-quality research, as judged by both external peer review and internal review by Medical Research Scotland Trustees. It supports a broad spectrum of medical research which aims to improve understanding of the basic mechanisms of disease processes; or improve the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of disease; or the advancement of medical technology.

Medical Research Scotland is comprehensive in that it will support research into the alleviation of all diseases. The endowment funds available to the Trust are divided between its large main fund for medical research and a number of smaller funds earmarked (by donors’ express wishes) for
research into specific disorders. The earmarked funds are for research into: arthritis, cancer, cardiac & vascular diseases, diabetes, kidney diseases and neurological diseases.

Medical Research Scotland is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC). We support the principle of using animals in research only when it is necessary to advance understanding of health and disease and to develop new treatments. This research only takes place where there is no alternative available.

All AMRC member charities support this principle, as outlined in the AMRC Statement on the use of animals in research.

Researcher support available from Medical Research Scotland

(HOW we plan to fund research, WHEN we make funding available and for HOW LONG)

Medical Research Scotland can only provide funding for its research awards by using the income from its endowed funds. This is augmented for its PhD Studentship awards by limited additional support from the companies involved.

Medical Research Scotland offers 4-year PhD Studentships and 8-week Undergraduate Vacation Scholarships. It also sponsors 2-year, part-time Daphne Jackson Fellowships in conjunction with that Trust. The number of awards made in any one year is at the discretion of the Trustees in light of the quality of the applications received and the funds available. It aims to support up to 10 PhD Studentships, 50 Undergraduate Vacation Research Scholarships and 3 Daphne Jackson Fellowships each year. (Information about closing dates for the different awards is at: www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/apply.htm)

The strength and prosperity of medical research in Scotland depends crucially on scientists of the highest quality entering the workforce with the skills needed to achieve in a highly competitive and productive field. The Medical Research Scotland Vacation Scholarships, PhD Studentships and Daphne Jackson Fellowships are designed to provide a stream of such suitably qualified and motivated individuals.

Researchers eligible for support from Medical Research Scotland

(WHO we will support and WHERE)

Medical Research Scotland is committed to making a difference to individuals considering, establishing or returning to a career in a medical research field in Scotland.

The Vacation Scholarships offer promising undergraduates the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of research during the summer vacation, with the aim of encouraging them to consider a career in medical research.

They are available to undergraduate students in a relevant subject, for example science, engineering, mathematics, medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, who are matriculated at a UK or Republic of Ireland University and who will not have graduated by the time they undertake their research placement. The awards are made to a project supervisor for a nominated student and a specified medically-relevant project and the research must take place at a Scottish University, recognised research institution or NHS teaching hospital. The Scholarships are not available for the completion of student projects that are part of the normal degree course, or for students wishing to undertake research outside Scotland.

The PhD Studentships aim to provide the best medical scientists with the skills and experience required to develop successful research careers in an increasingly difficult and competitive market, whether in academia or the commercial sector. They bring Scottish universities and research institutions together with companies trading in healthcare-related fields to deliver an innovative PhD programme incorporating all the benefits of a traditional academic programme, complemented by a commercial education training programme, tailored to the medical research field.

They are available to support high-performing graduates in an appropriate subject, for example science, engineering, mathematics, medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, who have shown outstanding performance in their education to date and gained at least a 2:1 first degree. The awards are made to Scottish universities and/or recognised research institutions, undertaking to work with a company trading in a healthcare-related field, to deliver the PhD training and supervision. The research must take place primarily in Scotland, although short placements elsewhere may be permitted if appropriate.
The **Medical Research Scotland Daphne Jackson Fellowships** are designed to increase employability significantly and remove the disadvantages associated with a research career break, by supporting those wishing to return to an area of medical research after a prolonged break.

They are available to suitably-motivated applicants who meet or exceed the criteria for consideration, which include having had a research career break of at least two years and having spent at least three years in research prior to a career break and/or have a PhD qualification. These flexible, part-time fellowships incorporate both a challenging research project, carried out in a Scottish University, and an individually tailored retraining programme.

Information about closing dates for Medical Research Scotland awards, and detailed information about eligibility and other conditions for the awards can be found in the "Funding" section of the website: [www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/funding.htm](http://www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/funding.htm)

**The future of research support from Medical Research Scotland**

Medical Research Scotland intends to:

- continue to provide support for medical research into the causes, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of injury and disease, and into the advancement of medical technology;
- maintain its commitment to supporting only the highest quality research as judged by external and internal peer review;
- maintain its determination to make a difference to individuals considering, embarking on, or returning to a career in medical research, by enhancing their training and preparation;
- keep under review the appropriateness and adequacy of the awards it offers to ensure the most effective use of its available funds in light of the changing medical, educational and research environment in Scotland, and seek advice from expert individuals and bodies outwith the Trust where appropriate;
- augment the funds available to enable the continued support and maintenance of the outstanding contribution of Scottish medical research to healthcare throughout the world;
- promote the contribution that Medical Research Scotland makes to better healthcare, both as a means to increase donations and also to further encourage research-minded individuals training and working in Scotland.

(October 2014)