

INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC REVIEW PANEL

ABOUT BREAST CANCER UK

Breast Cancer UK is dedicated to the prevention of breast cancer by tackling exposure to harmful chemicals and lifestyle risk factors. Whilst clinical research and increased awareness have helped to bring about improvements in diagnosing and treating breast cancer, incidence rates remain high. Today, the lifetime risk of breast cancer for women in the UK born after 1960 is 1 in 7. In England, incidence rates have nearly doubled since 1971 and increased by 3.5% in the last decade.

A potential risk factor for breast cancer is our daily exposure to certain harmful chemicals that are found in our environment, food and everyday products. There is a growing need to reduce our exposure to these harmful chemicals to help prevent breast cancer. Other ways we can help reduce our risk of breast cancer are by adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle.

ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC REVIEW PANEL

Breast Cancer UK's Independent Scientific Review Panel (henceforth described as the Science Panel) was established in September 2016 to help:

- Strengthen all aspects of Breast Cancer UK's science and grant funding program;
- Ensure that Breast Cancer UK sets high standards for applications and attracts good quality applicants;
- Peer review all grant applications received by the charity based on merit and ensure successful applicants meet the research criteria as set out by Breast Cancer UK;
- Ensure the charity selects the best projects for funding that add to the body of literature on the role of harmful chemicals, diet or lifestyle factors in breast cancer risk;
- Oversee the peer review of our own body of scientific literature to ensure it is of a good scientific standard, meets Information Standard criteria and is based on sound scientific data.

The original panel was made up of 8 members (1 Trustee, 4 independent co-optees, and 3 members of staff). From mid-2017 the panel grew and in September 2019 comprises 17 members, all independent co-optees who are not Breast Cancer UK staff or trustees. This is to ensure we continue to raise standards, tap into as much external expertise in a range of relevant scientific research areas as possible, to help relieve the burden on current members, and to ensure membership does not fall below a certain level, should members choose to resign from the panel.

Breast Cancer UK staff and trustees will no longer be members of the Science Panel.

ROLE DESCRIPTION OF A SCIENCE PANEL MEMBER

The primary purpose of Panel members is to offer independent, sound scientific advice, expertise and opinion to Breast Cancer UK on matters relating to its science programme, grant funding awards and scientific information.

It is responsible for the independent peer review of Breast Cancer UK publications, the peer review and assessment of grant applications and offers general guidance on scientific research, scientific priorities, Breast Cancer UK science messages and advocacy.

The Panel is independent of Breast Cancer UK, and as such is there to provide an independent and objective review of Breast Cancer UK's scientific processes, priorities and publications with a view to improving Breast Cancer UK's scientific credibility and reputation.

Science Panel members are not required to attend meetings.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The key responsibilities of Science Panel members include:

- Providing expert scientific advice and opinion on all risk factors for breast cancer, including environmental pollutants and/or the potential role played by chemicals in increasing breast cancer risk and the role of diet and lifestyle factors such as exercise and alcohol consumption in increasing risk
- Undertaking the periodic peer review of Breast Cancer UK publications (namely Breast Cancer UK's Background briefings on scientific issues, chemicals or other risk factors for breast cancer, and/or our public health information and advice leaflets)
- Peer reviewing grant applications from researchers from Universities and other independent academic institutions who are applying for our Annual Grant Award of £45k or other Breast Cancer UK funding. This will involve assessing whether the application meets the charity's research criteria, methodology, scientific merit and value for money of the applications received.
- Help to ensure that Breast Cancer UK is compliant with good scientific practice and guidance and principles as set by the Information Standard
- Panel members may be invited to participate in Breast Cancer UK round table events, but attendance will be optional
- Panel members will use their existing contacts and networks to help build the Panel's relationships with other relevant scientific research institutions, stakeholders and individuals.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

All Panel members must have a scientific background with a good understanding of the scientific data behind our concerns.

A specialist scientific background would be desirable - e.g. oncology, endocrinology, epidemiology, microbiology, biochemistry, genetics; academic (doctor, professor), clinical researcher or medical doctor.

A good understanding of the Third sector – with demonstrable experience in a similar office or at Executive or Board level.

Previous experience of peer reviewing applications and publications is desirable although not essential

An understanding or experience of the grant making processes would be an advantage

An understanding or experience of the Information Standard would also be useful

Panel members must maintain their independence.

They will not be required to attend regular Board of Trustee meetings and shall have no executive function or role.

TERMS

Members of the panel are expected to have the ability to commit approximately 15 hours each year on Panel-related work for Breast Cancer UK.

Panel members must let Breast Cancer UK know if any of their other activities might constitute a conflict of interest.

Panel members shall not normally hold office for more than five consecutive years,

Any office holder must ensure that they have sufficient time to devote to the role which is likely to be at about 1 day a month.

The office holder can step down at any time but should give 4 weeks' notice, in order to enable a smooth transition and honour any outstanding commitments.

The Board of Trustees and/or Science Committee reserves the right to request that any office holder steps down from their role.

CONTACT

If Science Panel members have any questions or comments, they are asked to contact Breast Cancer UK's Head of Science, Dr. Margaret Wexler or Scientific Research Officer, Ms Patricia Bischoff, (science@breastcanceruk.org.uk).