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**Guidelines for applicants: supplementary introduction**

The Midland Neuroscience Teaching and Research Fund was established over 50 years ago, to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Midland Centre for Neurosurgery and Neurology. This unit has since closed, and its specialist services have been re-located in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham. The Charity nevertheless continues to operate, independently, supported financially by donations made by individuals who have benefitted from the work of their treating clinicians.

When originally established, the fund aimed, specifically, at promoting the education and development of young people who were training in the clinical neurosciences. It did this, in part, by sponsoring lectures given by senior figures in the clinical neurosciences. In addition, it sought to finance small research projects carried out by neuroscience trainees. Often this took the form of purchasing items of equipment that could be used again, once the research was complete, in clinical service. Purchase of bedside monitoring equipment would have been a good example in the past. These days, the cost of research equipment is often beyond the budget of the Charity, but it nevertheless provides grants in the range of £5,00 - £10,000, to purchase smaller items of equipment, often part of relevant laboratory-based research.

The research projects that the Charity supports are not confined to the clinical arena, but they must have direct relevance to clinical practice. In addition, the Charity remains committed to supporting trainee researchers, rather than established members of hospital or academic staff. The research workers who we support must, however, be supervised by senior members of staff, who occupy permanent positions of employment in an NHS hospital, a university or other, recognised research institute. The Charity also restricts its coverage to the geographical area where post-graduate training is supervised by the West Midlands Deanery - although the Charity does not have any formal links with this body.

Interpretation of what constitutes a trainee position is relevant. This relates not to seniority in years but, rather, to an applicant’s position along his or her career path. A former graduate in another discipline, who might now be developing a new career, would not be excluded based on age. The term “early career” researcher might be better than the word trainee. We would define such a person as someone who has achieved a bachelor’s degree in medicine, surgery or science but who has since progressed no more than three years beyond having obtained a higher academic degree or professional qualification and who has not yet taken up a substantive NHS consultant post or permanent university appointment.

The Midland Neuroscience Teaching and Research Fund invites applications for grants twice a year. This is a competitive process and, currently, only two or three grants are affordable each year. If multiple applications are received in any one period, then it is likely that one or more individual will be disappointed. Applications are assessed by a panel of experts, made up of senior clinicians and research scientists. If an application is rejected, then the panel will feed-back its reasons and any further guidance to applicants. The Charity is also happy to receive informal, exploratory enquires, in advance of formal applications, and provide advice as to whether a proposed project is likely to fall within its remit, as a grant-giving body.

Before submitting their proposal, applicants are asked to read the standard terms and conditions (below), as would apply to any research grant. Please then complete the application template, paying attention to the guidance notes preceding each section. Applications are also reviewed by non-expert members of the Charity so please take care when composing your brief, lay summary.