

# Research Funding Strategy



## Introduction

Medical Research Scotland is Scotland's largest independent comprehensive charity funder of medical research. 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](http://www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/about.htm)).

The endowment funds of Medical Research Scotland are administered by a body of Members (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 Members of Medical Research Scotland are only empowered to provide support for research from income received from the endowment funds.

The Trust's Research Strategy is drawn up in light of the currently prevailing medical, educational and research 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:

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

Medical Research Scotland fulfils its objectives by supporting young scientists, encouraging and supporting them in establishing careers in biomedical science.

Following a major strategic review of all its activities (2009-10), the Members of Medical Research Scotland decided to introduce an innovative new funding stream to replace the 'traditional' Research Project Grant awards. The intention remains to support the careers of young people in biomedical research in Scotland, albeit by a different route. It will be focusing on the earlier stages, with the aim of making a positive difference to the research careers of those whom it supports, while also helping to strengthen Scotland's biomedical 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 international peer review and internal review by Medical Research Scotland Members. It supports the broad spectrum of laboratory-based biomedical and clinical research, all of which is aimed at improving understanding of the basic mechanisms of disease processes; or improving 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; it is not restricted in any way. 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.

## **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 will be augmented for its PhD Studentship awards by limited additional support from the companies involved.

Medical Research Scotland offers 4-year **PhD Studentship** awards and 8-week **Undergraduate Vacation Scholarship** awards. The number of awards made in any one year is at the discretion of the Members, in light of the quality of the applications received and the funds available. It is the intention that up to up to 10 PhD Studentship awards and up to 20 Undergraduate Vacation Scholarships will be available each year. (Information about closing dates is at: [www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/apply.htm](http://www.medicalresearchscotland.org.uk/apply.htm))

The strength and prosperity of biomedical research in Scotland depends crucially on young 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 and PhD Studentship awards are designed to provide 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 young people considering a career in biomedical research and also to those embarking on their postgraduate PhD research training in a biomedical field.

The Medical Research Scotland **Vacation Scholarships** provide promising undergraduates with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of research during the summer vacation, with the aim of encouraging them to consider a career in biomedical research.

**Undergraduate Vacation Scholarship awards:** These are available to undergraduate students in science, 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 project and the research **must** take place at a University, recognised research institution or NHS teaching hospital in Scotland. 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 in laboratories outside Scotland.

Most PhD graduates leave academia. Acknowledging this, Medical Research Scotland believes that by providing enhanced training for science PhD students, it will make a valuable contribution to their future careers in biomedical science. The Medical Research Scotland **PhD Studentships** will bring Scottish universities and research institutions together with companies trading in Scotland in health-related fields. Together they will deliver an innovative PhD programme incorporating all the benefits of a traditional academic programme, complemented by a commercial education training programme, tailored to the biomedical research field. Through education, training programmes and the supervisory roles of young scientists, the Medical Research Scotland PhD Studentship awards provide the best young biomedical scientists with the skills and experience required to develop successful research careers in an increasingly difficult and competitive market.

**PhD Studentship awards:** These are available to support high-performing graduates in science, 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 Scotland 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.

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 to research into the cause, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of all forms of illness and genetic disorders, 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 panels;
- maintain its determination to make a difference to young people embarking on a career in biomedical 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 the funds available to it in light of the continually changing medical, educational and research scene in Scotland, seeking 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 young people training and working in Scotland.

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