



13 November 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00834**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 17 September, and clarification received on the 24 October, in which you requested the following:

**Your original request:**

*I would like to request the information below:*

*The MRC welcomes good quality research on ME/CFS (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) but few studies get funded.*

*What is the decision process of what studies get funded?*

*Who sits on the decision boards (names and positions)?*

*I would like this information to cover the years from 2010 to 2024.*

**Our clarification response:**

*Thank you for your Freedom of Information request, received 17 September, in which you requested information relating to ME/CFS (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) funding.*

*In regard to the decision process of what studies get funded, information on an [overview of MRC review process](#)<sup>1</sup>, [what happens after you submit a proposal](#)<sup>2</sup> and [guidance for peer reviewers](#)<sup>3</sup> is already available online through the above links. We believe that information on what happens after a proposal is submitted may be particularly helpful.*

*It should also be noted that relevant applications could be submitted to any one of MRC's funding schemes, therefore there is not one specific decision board that is responsible for reviewing grant applications relating to ME/CFS.*

*Current membership of MRC research boards and panels is already available and published [here](#)<sup>4</sup>.*

*Given that membership of these panels is regularly changing, to provide historical membership data on every MRC board and panel dating back to 2010 would likely result in over 200 individual lists. Therefore, if there are particular boards or panels that you are interested in seeing this data for, please let us know.*

*We otherwise hope that the above information is sufficient to answer your request, but if you would like any additional information that may be held by MRC or UKRI, please can you clarify and confirm the information you wish to obtain.*

**Your amended request:**

*I understand that the 2010 to 2024 scope would mean too many studies and reviewers.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/overview-of-mrc-review-process/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/what-happens-after-you-submit-your-proposal/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/carrying-out-a-peer-review/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/board-and-panel-membership/>

Can I ask instead:

How many applications did the MRC get in the last 5 years for studies on ME/CFS (both successful and unsuccessful)?

What were the studies names and their authors?

Who were the reviewers?

Which studies were successful?

#### Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

Table 1 contains details of the number of grant applications received and projects funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) relating to ME/CFS from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

**Table 1: ME/CFS Applications by Financial Year**

Financial Year	Applications Received	Funded Projects
2020/21	4	1
2021/22	3	0
2022/23	2	0
2023/24	2	1
2024/25	3	0*
Total	14	2

\* 2 applications made during 24/25 are still under assessment and funding decisions have not yet been made

Details of the successful projects, including the name of the principal investigator (PI), are available from [UKRI's Gateway to Research](#)<sup>5</sup>:

- [MC\\_PC\\_20005](#)<sup>6</sup> - A genome-wide association study of myalgic encephalomyelitis / chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)
- [MR/Y003667/1](#)<sup>7</sup> - Role of pharmacological activity of autoantibodies in ME/CFS

We have determined that information relating to unsuccessful grant applications falls under Section 41 of the FOIA, information provided in confidence.

To explain further, applicants apply for funding with the knowledge that if successful their information will be published. It is therefore implied that applicants can confidently apply and information relating to their application will be kept confidential, unless they are successful. If the information was released, we believe it would result in an actionable breach of confidentiality.

Section 41 is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

As detailed in the [overview of the MRC review process](#)<sup>8</sup>, grant applications for MRC's responsive mode funding are initially peer reviewed by independent assessors and then assessed by a standing research board or panel.

The applications included in Table 1 above were all reviewed by either the Infections and Immunity Board (IIB) or the Population & Systems Medicine Board (PSMB), with the exception of two; one application in 2021/22 was reviewed by the Neurosciences and Mental Health Board (NMHB) and the 2020/21 funded project (MC\_PC\_20005) did not go through responsive mode funding, instead this was a commissioned study, co-funded by MRC and National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). This was assessed by a bespoke panel of experts appointed by MRC and NIHR, along with a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) representative.

<sup>5</sup> <https://qtr.ukri.org/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=MC\\_PC\\_20005](https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=MC_PC_20005)

<sup>7</sup> <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=MR%2FY003667%2F1>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/overview-of-mrc-review-process/>

Membership of MRC's boards and panels is published to UKRI's website. Membership for 2024/25 is available [here](#)<sup>9</sup>. We have included historical membership of the IIB and PSMB from 2020/21 to 2023/24, as well as the membership of NMHB for 2021/22 in Annex 1, attached below.

Please note that not all board and panel members attend every meeting, therefore the information provided is on the standing membership of each board and not the individuals who assessed each individual application.

We are exempting the names of the independent assessors that conducted initial peer reviews of responsive mode grants, and individuals involved in the assessment of the successful co-funded grant MC\_PC\_20005, under section 40(2) of the FOIA. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance

Email: [foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org)

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints procedure](#)<sup>10</sup>.

Yours sincerely,

  
Information Governance  
Information Rights Team  
UK Research and Innovation  
[foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) | [dataprotection@ukri.org](mailto:dataprotection@ukri.org)

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/board-and-panel-membership/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>

## Annex 1 – Board and Panel Membership

### Infections and Immunity Board (IIB)

Name	Institution	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24 (1)	23/24 (2)
Professor David Baker	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	M	M			
Professor Jonathan Ball	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine					M
Professor Wendy Barclay	Imperial College London					C
Professor Jose Bengoechea	Queen's University Belfast	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Elaine Bignell	University of Exeter			M	M	M
Professor Gordon Brown	MRC Centre for Medical Mycology, University of Exeter	M	M			
Professor Clare Bryant	University of Cambridge					M
Dr Dinis Calado	The Francis Crick Institute					M
Dr Luiz Carvalho	The Francis Crick Institute	M	M		M	
Professor Alison Condliffe	University of Sheffield Medical School		DC	DC	DC	DC
Professor Andrea Cooper	University of Leicester	DC				
Professor Adam Cunningham	University of Birmingham	M	M			
Professor Martin Donnelly	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Tania Dottorini	University of Nottingham	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Daniela De Angelis	MRC Biostatistics Unit, University of Cambridge	M	M	M	M	
Professor Gillian Elliott	University of Surrey	M	M			
Professor Ariberto Fassati	University College London		M	M	M	M
Professor Nicholas Feasey	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine & Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Clinical Research Programme / University of St Andrews		M	M	M	M
Professor Eric Fevre	University of Liverpool	M	M	M	M	
Professor Ian Goodfellow	University of Cambridge	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Maximiliano Gutierrez	The Francis Crick Institute					M
Professor Robert Heyderman	University College London	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Simon Jones	Cardiff University	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Paul Kaye	University of York	C	C	C	C	
Professor Linda Klavinskis	King's College London	M	M	M	M	
Dr Sean Lim	University of Southampton	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Adrian Liston	Babraham Institute / St Catherines College, University of Cambridge	M	M	M	M	M
Dr Stephen Lockhart	Pfizer Vaccine R&D	M	M	M	M	M
Professor Neil Mabbott	University of Edinburgh			M	M	M
Professor Andrew MacDonald	University of Manchester	M	M			
Professor Harish Nair	University of Edinburgh					M
Professor Jürgen Schwarze	University of Edinburgh	M				
Professor Alison Simmons	Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine	M	M	M	M	
Professor Tom Solomon	University of Liverpool	M	M			
Professor Jo Spencer	Kings College London	M	M			
Dr Jonathan Stoye	Francis Crick Institute	M				
Professor Rita Tewari	University of Nottingham			M	M	M
Dr David Tough	GSK			M	M	M
Professor Lucy Wedderburn	University College London			M	M	M
Professor Adrian Whitehouse	University of Leeds			M	M	M
Professor Mark Wilcox	University of Leeds	M				

#### Key:

'C' denotes Chair

'DC' denotes Deputy Chair

'M' denotes Member

Please note, the membership of the IIB changed during 2023/24, therefore both sets of membership are listed

## Population & Systems Medicine Board (PSMB)

Name	Institution	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Professor Stephen Allen	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine		M	M	M
Professor Philip Atherton	University of Nottingham			M	M
Professor Linda Bauld	University of Edinburgh	M	M	M	
Professor Sinead Brophy	Swansea University	M	M	M	M
Professor Barbara Casadei	University of Oxford		M		
Professor Edwin Chilvers	Imperial College London		M	M	
Professor Menna Clatworthy	University of Cambridge	M	M	M	
Professor Adnan Custovic	Imperial College London	M			
Professor Francesco D'Aiuto	University College London			M	M
Professor Mirela Delibegovic	University of Aberdeen			M	M
Professor Waljit Dhillon	Imperial College London			M	M
Professor William Dixon	University of Manchester	M	M	M	M
Professor Andrew Floto	University of Cambridge			M	M
Professor Tom Gaunt	University of Bristol	M	M	M	M
Professor David Grieve	Queen's University Belfast			M	M
Professor Jonathan Grigg	Queen Mary University of London		M	M	M
Professor Liam Heaney	Queens University Belfast	M			
Dr Bevan Huang	Johnson & Johnson	M	DC	DC	
Professor David Hunter	University of Oxford	M	M		
Professor Rosalind John	Cardiff University			M	M
Professor Arthur Kaser	University of Cambridge		M	M	M
Professor Julie Lovegrove	University of Reading		M	M	M
Professor Valeria O'Donnell	Cardiff University	DC			
Professor Margaret MacLean	University of Strathclyde	M	M	M	
Professor Derek Mann	Newcastle University			M	M
Professor Rory McCrimmon	University of Dundee	M	M		
Professor Dennis McGonagle	University of Leeds	M	M	M	M
Professor Michael Müller	University of East Anglia	M			
Professor Sandosh Padmanabhan	University of Glasgow	M	M	M	M
Professor Colin Palmer	University of Dundee	M	M		
Professor Helen Picton	University of Leeds	M	M		
Professor Siobhan Quenby	University of Warwick		M	M	M
Dr Gemma Satterthwaite	AstraZeneca			M	M
Professor Avan Aihie Sayer	Newcastle University	M	M		
Professor Robert Semple	University of Edinburgh	M	M	DC	DC
Professor Eric Robinson	University of Liverpool			M	M
Professor Jeremy Tomlinson	University of Oxford	M	M		
Professor Ellie Tzima	University of Oxford			M	M
Professor David van Heel	Queen Mary University of London	M			
Professor Louise Wain	University of Leicester			M	DC
Professor Brian Walker	Newcastle University	C	C	C	C
Professor Catherine Williamson	Kings College London	M			
Professor Stephen Allen	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine		M	M	

### Key:

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## Neurosciences and Mental Health Board (NMHB)

Name	Institution	21/22
Dr Duncan Astle	University of Cambridge	M
Professor David Bennett	University of Oxford	M
Professor Jeffrey Dalley	University of Cambridge	M
Professor Judy R. Dubno	Medical University of South Carolina	M
Professor Elizabeth Fisher	University College London	M
Dr Diego Gomez-Nicola	University of Southampton	M
Professor Jeremy Hall	Cardiff University	DC
Professor Andrew Jackson	Newcastle University	M
Professor Ann John	University of Swansea	M
Professor Marcus Kaiser	University of Nottingham	M
Professor Peter Magill	University of Oxford	M
Professor Oscar Marin	Kings College London	M
Professor Paul Matthews	Imperial College London	C
Professor Irene Miguel-Aliaga	Imperial College London	M
Professor Jonathan Mill	University of Exeter	M
Professor Pradeep Nathan	H. Lundbeck A/S & University of Cambridge	M
Professor Rickie Patani	Francis Crick Institute / University College London	M
Professor Edwin Robertson	University of Glasgow	M
Dr William Schafer	MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology	M
Professor Alexandra Sinclair	University of Birmingham	M
Professor Daniel Smith	University of Edinburgh	M
Professor Tara Spires-Jones	University of Edinburgh	M
Professor Rachel Upthegrove	University of Birmingham	M
Professor Cornelia M van Duijn	Nuffield Department of Population Health & Big Data Institute - Li Ka Shing Centre for Health Information and Discovery, University of Oxford	M
Professor Anna Williams	University of Edinburgh	M

### Key:

'C' denotes Chair

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