

Fungal Research Trust

Research Strategy 2004-2008

Fungal diseases include skin, mucous membrane and invasive infections, in man and animals. Allergy to fungi is common. Fungi also produce mycotoxins, which are ingested in considerable quantities in foods in the developing world, leading to direct toxicity and/or cancer. Fungi are the major cause of plant diseases, and recently described as a major fatal disease of corals. Some fungi are useful to man, in particular the brewing yeast, in composting and in biotechnology (e.g. citric acid production).

The focus of the Fungal Research Trust (FRT) research and educational effort is human disease. Around 10,000 patients in the UK each year develop a life-threatening fungal infection and about 50% die of this. Over 150,000 women develop recurrent vaginal thrush annually, and some are almost constantly affected. Fungal nail infections probably affect 1,500,000 people in the UK, and currently the expenditure in the UK on skin fungal infections in England alone is £28M. Overall antifungal expenditure in England is £40M via GPs (2002) and about £50M in hospitals, not including self medication with over the counter medicines. There are no good estimates of allergic fungal disease in the UK, but it is undoubtedly common.

The Fungal research Trust is particularly interested in supporting proposals in the following 3 areas, although none will be excluded if they are of high quality and meritorious:

- Basic science aspects of *Aspergillus* and other airborne fungi,
- Clinical and related research work, in all types of fungal disease,
- Training in diagnostic sciences related to fungal disease.

Proposals and peer review

The FRT will be both proactive and responsive in driving forward the research strategy. The FRT website has the capability of receiving outline proposals. Full proposals will be peer-reviewed and assessed by the Research Advisory Board, which will consist of a total of several members including the Vice-Chairman of the Trustees as Chairman. Members of the Research Advisory Board are all experts in different areas of fungal infection, infectious diseases, medicine and microbiology. External assessors will peer-review the grant applications prior to discussion by the Research Advisory Board who will put a recommendation to fund before the Trustees. Final funding decisions will be made by the Trustees.