

Call for Experts WHO Polio Research Committee (PRC)			
Issued:	13 December 2023	Deadline:	02 February 2024

The World Health Organization (WHO) is seeking experts to serve as members of the Polio Research Committee (PRC). This “Call for experts” provides information about the PRC, the expert profiles being sought, the process to express interest, and the process of selection. If you have any questions, please e-mail polioresearch@who.int

Background

Established in 2008, the Polio Research Committee (PRC) provides guidance on the overall strategic direction of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative’s global programme of research, which encompasses dozens of projects from a wide range of core scientific disciplines. Specifically, the PRC provides guidance to the GPEI on long-term risk management for the post-eradication era, as well as on identifying, developing and evaluating new tools and tailored eradication tactics to maximise the impact of eradication efforts to more rapidly interrupt wild poliovirus transmission globally.

In this capacity, the PRC reviews polio eradication-related research, identifies knowledge gaps, proposes appropriate studies, determines research priorities and funding levels, reviews external research proposals and engages potential new collaborators.

The PRC is comprised of global experts from a variety of disciplines, including virology, epidemiology, public health and clinical trial specialists.

Functions of the PRC

In its capacity as an advisory group (AG) of the WHO, the PRC is expected to review ongoing and concluded research initiatives related to polio and provide guidance; additionally, the PRC serves as a scientific review body for incoming research proposals.

In close collaboration (administrative and technical support) with the WHO Secretariat (also see section: Secretariat of the PRC), the PRC is expected to:

1. Review polio eradication-related research;
2. Identify the remaining gaps in knowledge for interrupting wild poliovirus transmission and assessing and managing risks in the post-eradication era;
3. Determine a list of study questions to address those gaps and risks;
4. Propose to WHO appropriate studies to be initiated, commissioned or funded by GPEI (Global Polio Eradication Initiative) and/or interested stakeholders to address priority knowledge gaps;
5. Review external research proposals in terms of conception, design and scientific merit, and advise WHO on their respective priorities and funding levels;

6. Monitor, evaluate and advise WHO on the dissemination of progress and findings from all relevant research;

7. Advise WHO on further engagement of solution-oriented interested parties, stakeholders and potential new collaborators.

Operations of the PRC

Members of the PRC will be expected to attend teleconference/in-person meetings to discuss and finalize the recommendations of polio research initiatives. The working language of the PRC will be English. The frequency and duration of meetings or teleconference of the PRC are subject to change, but are normally two-day bi-annual meetings. PRC meetings may be held in open and/or closed session, as decided by the Chair in consultation with WHO. The closed sessions will be to formulate recommendations for WHO and will be restricted to the AG members.

PRC members do not receive any remuneration from WHO for the work performed. However, when attending in-person meetings at the invitation of WHO, travel cost and per diem shall be covered by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies.

Additional information on the functions- and operations- of the PRC are available in the terms of reference of the PRC available at:

<https://polioeradication.org/tools-and-library/current-research-areas/polio-research-committee/>

Duration of PRC membership

Members, including the Chair of the PRC, shall be appointed to serve for a period of at least three years per appointment and shall be eligible for reappointment once unless circumstances require otherwise. The Chair can be re-appointed as an AG member but is only permitted to serve as Chair for one term. To avoid the loss of capacity of the PRC due to the end of appointment of several members at one time, WHO may introduce a rotation-off policy taking into consideration the interest of WHO, intention of the member and code of conduct of WHO experts. The appointment of members of the PRC or designation as Chairperson of PRC may be terminated at any time by WHO if WHO's interest so requires, or as otherwise specified in the terms of reference of the PRC.

Eligibility and required expertise of members of the PRC

The PRC will be multidisciplinary, with members who have a range of technical knowledge, skills and experience relevant to: vaccinology, virology, biosafety, epidemiology, clinical trial design and immunization programmes. Where feasible priority will also be given to those with experience in conducting vaccine-related research in developing country settings, etc. In the selection, consideration shall also be given to attaining an adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation, and gender balance.

PRC members must respect the impartiality and independence required of WHO. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to WHO. They must be free of any real, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest.

Following a determination that a proposed member's participation in the AG would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest, the proposed member will be sent a letter inviting them to be a member of the AG. Their appointment to the AG is subject to WHO receiving the countersigned

invitation letter and letter of agreement. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the WHO declaration of interest form, AG members have an ongoing obligation to inform the WHO of any interests real or perceived that may give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

Secretariat of the PRC

WHO shall provide the secretariat support for the PRC , including all necessary scientific, technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO Secretariat shall provide the members in advance of each meeting with the agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of the aforesaid documents to Observers will be determined by the WHO Secretariat. The meeting agenda shall include details such as: open/closed portions of the meeting and whether Observers are permitted to attend.

Expression of interest for membership of the PRC

To register your interest in being considered for the PRC, please submit the following documents by 15 January 2024 (UTC/GMT +2 hours) (early submissions are encouraged) to polioresearch@who.int using the subject line 'Expression of interest for the PRC'

- Brief cover letter (as an attachment or embedded in the body of the e-mail) indicating your motivation to apply, your expertise and how you satisfy the eligibility and other pertinent information relevant to the work of the PRC. Please note that, if selected, membership will be in a personal capacity – thus institutional or employer letterheads or other such identifiers should not be used.
- Your curriculum vitae; and
- A signed and completed Declaration of Interests (DOI) form for WHO Experts, available at <https://www.who.int/about/ethics/declarations-of-interest>.

After submission, your expression of interest will be reviewed by WHO. Due to an expected high volume of interest, only selected individuals will be informed.

Important information about the selection processes and conditions of appointment of the PRC

Members of the PRC must be free of any real, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, applicants are required to complete the WHO Declaration of Interests for WHO Experts, as stated above, and the selection as a member of the PRC is, amongst other things, dependent on WHO determining that there is no conflict of interest or that any identified conflicts could be appropriately managed (in addition to WHO's evaluation of an applicant's experience, expertise and motivation and other criteria).

All PRC members must meet necessary requirements in terms of confidentiality and will serve in their individual expert capacity and shall not represent any governments, any commercial industries or entities, any research, academic or civil society organizations, or any other bodies, entities, institutions, or organizations. PRC members cannot have a financial or professional engagement with a commercial entity the use of whose products may influence the PRC or its work. In addition, PRC members may neither submit proposals for funding, nor shall they receive funds through any decision of the PRC. They are expected to fully comply with the Code of Conduct for WHO Experts (<https://www.who.int/about/ethics/declarations-of-interest>).

At any point during the selection process, telephone interviews may be scheduled between an applicant and the WHO Secretariat to enable WHO to ask questions relating to the applicant's

experience and expertise and/or to assess whether the applicant meets the criteria for membership in the PRC.

If selected by WHO, proposed members will be sent an invitation letter and a Memorandum of Agreement. Appointment as a member of the PRC will be subject to the proposed member returning to WHO the countersigned copy of these two documents.

WHO reserves the right to accept or reject any expression of interest, to annul the open call process and reject all expressions of interest at any time without incurring any liability to the affected applicant or applicants and without any obligation to inform the affected applicant or applicants of the grounds for WHO's action. WHO may also decide, at any time, not to proceed with the selection of new members or their reappointment, disband the existing group or modify the work of the PRC.

WHO shall not in any way be obliged to reveal, or discuss with any applicant, how an expression of interest was assessed, or to provide any other information relating to the evaluation/selection process or to state the reasons for not choosing a member.

If you have any questions, please e-mail polioresearch@who.int well in advance of the deadline.

Useful websites:

- GPEI website: <https://polioeradication.org/>