



1. WRITER AWARD TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Definitions
2. Purpose
3. Entry
4. Theme, Requirements, Dates, Judging, Prizes etc
5. Agreements and Conditions re Publication
6. GDPR
 - a. General
 - b. Consents
7. General

1. Definitions

Entrant – person who writes and submits the application.

Writing – the piece of writing produced solely by the Entrant and submitted for judging.

Charity – ME Research UK, 6 Atholl Crescent, Perth, PH1 5JN (SC036943).

Competition – ME Research UK’s “Founders’ Science Writing Award” 2026.

Application Form – form produced by ME Research UK to be completed in full by the Entrant.

- Said form to capture the entrant’s name, address, Institution (if applicable), contact details (incl. email address), category of eligibility, acceptance of these Ts and C’s and any part there of (incl. GDPR provisions), potential and actual conflict of interest, and to capture the Writing in English.

Winner (s) – the person or persons awarded first, second or third prize by the judges. Singular includes plural.

Agreement – the contractual provisions of these terms and conditions accepted by the Entrant when completing the Application Form.

NB - Masculine includes feminine and singular the plural.

2. Purpose

Communicating science in a way that is accessible and engaging to the general public is a key skill across all areas of research. It is required throughout the research process from lay summaries in grant applications, to study documents such as participant information leaflets and informed consent forms, through to disseminating findings in a way that the public, be it patients, family members or health care professionals, can understand.

To provide less experienced researchers with the opportunity to gain experience in communicating science to the general public, ME Research UK initiated the “Founders’ Science Writing Award” in 2024. This annual competition invites high quality articles relevant to biomedical research into ME/CFS. It is intended that the Writing accords with the Charity’s aims which are to fund biomedical research into the causes, consequences and treatment of ME/CFS.

“The Writing must be the entrants own work expressing the entrants own (i.e. not garnered 3rd party input) original thought, and not previously submitted for competition elsewhere, and must not be in the process of, or actually be, published elsewhere – which includes in spoken form e.g. podcast.”

It is intended that winning entries will be published by ME Research UK in print and electronic formats and the winners may, in CV's etc, indicate they are prize winner of ME Research UK's "Founders' Science Writing Award 2026".

3. Entry

Who can enter?

Those in the field of biomedical research of ME/CFS who are:

- PhD students
- Early career researchers: namely those
 - within the first 5 years post PhD award (or part-time equivalent, and excluding career breaks such as parental leave)
 - are not, or would not be, the principal investigator (or co-principal investigator) on any grant application.

There is no geographic restriction on entries.

Entry to the initiative is open to individuals and not intended for joint applications.

Those with past and/or present funding from ME Research UK will be considered as eligible to enter, provided they are either a PhD student, or early career researcher.

Who is ineligible

- Current and past Trustees and employees of ME Research UK
- Any person who is a 'connected person' of the above namely
 - spouse, or
 - civil partner, or
 - a person who is living as husband or wife or, where the Entrant and the other person are of the same sex, in an equivalent relationship, or
 - any child (incl. stepchild of any aforementioned, adopted child, or child treated by the Trustee as if the person were a child of the Trustee), parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother or sister of the Trustee (and any spouse of any such person).

Any potential conflict of interest with the charity, its employees, Trustees, or connected persons and the Entrant must be disclosed on the Application Form.

4. Themes, Writing Requirements, Dates, Judging, Prizes etc

- Theme

Whilst all areas of research require scientists to think critically – for example, about the topic of investigation, the population of interest, and the methods used – for ME/CFS researchers, there are additional challenges to consider, including the complex nature of the disease; for example ME/CFS symptoms can not only differ between people, between population groups, and even within the same individual over time.

Therefore, ME Research UK invites Entrants to consider the evidence relating to the following; "Heterogeneity in ME/CFS research populations – challenges faced, lessons learned, and

next steps". This could be specifically in relation to the Entrant's area of research, or a wider take on current understanding or state of ME/CFS research.

- Writing Requirements

The Writing MUST BE

- Submitted in English using the Charity's entry form.
- No more than 1000 words in length.
- Engaging and interesting to read.
- Suitable for publishing in our bi-annual Breakthrough magazine and online.
- Written in a way that is accessible to the general public and free from scientific jargon.
- Self-explanatory and does not require further background reading by the lay reader.
- Original material being the Entrant's own work, and not previously submitted for competition elsewhere, and not in the process of or actually be published elsewhere – which includes in spoken form e.g. podcast.
- Accompanied by references - where the work of others is used the Entrant must acknowledge (by referencing) this material, this should be done as a hyperlink under the relevant text. Where a quote is used it must be a direct quote from the source (with a hyperlink under the relevant text citation giving the source).
- A product of your own intellectual efforts and original thought (i.e. not garnered 3rd party input), without any form of falsification or fabrication (including fabrication by artificial intelligence (AI) software) or plagiarism.
 - Where AI is used for research, you should consider it as a research tool, and you should ensure that you cite its use by inserting a footnote or endnote which acknowledges that you used such software and with what it helped you.
 - While you are permitted to use artificial intelligence software to help you understand material and how it may be expressed, you are not allowed to use that software to complete the Writing. If you use artificial intelligence software to complete the writing for you, ME Research UK will consider it to be plagiarism.

Incorrect, missing, or falsified references will be deemed indicative of plagiarism - ME Research UK has the absolute right to reject any writing which it considers is tainted by plagiarism.

- Dates

The competition opens **12 noon 12th May 2026**

Completed applications must be received by the no later than **5pm 13th July 2026** and submitted to: competition@meresearch.org.uk

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

In all cases, ME Research UK reserves the right to disallow any application in its sole discretion without need to provide a reason.

The Charity will aim to notify the winners by email between 4-6 weeks after the competition closing date. However, this may be subject to delay where a large number of entries are received. Should there be a delay, Entrants will be notified by email no later than September 30th 2026.

- Judging

The judging process will be completed by staff members of ME Research UK with potential input of Trustees of the charity. Some of the persons involved in judging will have lived experience of ME/CFS. The judges will be blinded to the identity of the Entrants.

Initially, entries will be screened for compliance with competition rules and entry requirements.

Entries meeting rules and requirements of the competition will then be assessed by at least two members of the judging panel on the following 5 judging criteria:

Criteria		Total score possible
1	Concept	15
2	Relevance to the theme	10
3	Clarity and accuracy of information for a non-scientific audience	10
4	Evidence of critical and analytical thinking	10
5	Engagement	5
Total		50

An overview of the judging process is provided below:

Judging process		Receiver	Judge 1: Science writer	Judge 2: Science writer	Judge 3: Lay person	Judge 4: Charity trustee
Step 1	Screen entries for compliance with competition rules and entry requirements, and blind submissions.	X				
Step 2	Assess all entries successful at stage 1 on the four judging criteria		X	X	X	
Step 3	Agree and rank articles.		X	X	X	
Step 4	Select first, second and third place entries.					X

- Prizes

At the absolute discretion of the Charity (which reserves the right not to award any or all prizes) and providing submissions are of high enough quality, the winning article will be published in 'Breakthrough' Autumn 2026 and on the website, second and third place articles may be published on the website, only. (if awarded) the following cash prizes are available:

1st placed article - £500, 2nd placed - £200, and £100 for 3rd place.

The winners may also say they are prize winners of ME Research UK's "Founders' Science Writing Award 2025".

Only prize-winning Writings will be published by ME Research UK.

The winners will provide the Charity with valid and full bank details to enable payment of sums due by direct transfer into a bank account in the name of the Winner. ME Research UK can only make payment by bank transfer to an account which it is legally able to under UK law. Payment will be made in Sterling and converted into the winner's preferred currency *en route* if demanded. The Charity will bear the sender bank charges and the winner the recipient bank charges. The Charity has no liability for variances in currency values and shall have fulfilled its payment obligations by instructing its bank to make payment of the GBP amount agreed and claimed irrespective of the currency amount which is actually received.

5. Agreements and Conditions re Publication

By entering the competition the Entrant accepts that the charity may publish winning entries in its free, open-source magazine 'Breakthrough' which is published in written and electronic format and available for copying without limit. The Charity reserve the right to edit the Writing prior to publication, where this is necessary. The Writing may also appear on the charity's website, social media, and promotional materials either in whole or in part. The copyright, intellectual property rights etc in the Writing will be owned by ME Research UK. The Winner may wish the right to be identified as the author and, depending on the circumstances, the Charity may be able to accommodate this.

By entering the competition, the Entrant accepts that upon accepting the prize -

- 1.1 The Winner assigns to the Charity all existing and future Intellectual Property Rights i.e., copyright in the Writing to the fullest extent permitted by law. Insofar as they do not vest automatically by operation of law or under this agreement, the Entrant holds legal title in these rights on trust for the Charity. The Winner acknowledges that once published, any writings will be in the public domain and may be reproduced and communicated freely as 'open source' and shall have no right to object, restrain or claim any fee or payment for use.
- 1.2 The Winner undertakes to the Charity:
 - (a) not to register nor attempt to register any of the Intellectual Property Rights in the Writing or claim copyright to the works.
 - (b) to do all acts necessary to confirm that absolute title in all Intellectual Property Rights in the Writing and copyright has passed, or will pass, to the Charity.
- 1.3 The Winner warrants that:
 - (a) he has not given and will not give permission to any third party to use any of the Writing, nor any of the Intellectual Property Rights or copyright in the Writing.

- (b) he is unaware of any use by any third party of any of the Writing or Intellectual Property Rights or copyright in the Writing; and
 - (c) the use of the Writing or the Intellectual Property Rights or copyright in the Writing by the Charity will not infringe the rights of any third party.
- 1.4 The Winner agrees to indemnify the Charity and keep it indemnified at all times against all or any costs, claims, damages or expenses incurred by the Charity, or for which the Charity may become liable, with respect to any intellectual property infringement claim, copyright claim or other claims relating to the Writing supplied by the Winner to the Charity in respect of the competition.
- 1.5 The Winner waives any moral rights in the Writing to which it is now or may at any future time be entitled the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or any similar provisions of law in any jurisdiction, including (but without limitation) the right to be identified, the right of integrity and the right against false attribution, and agrees not to institute, support, maintain or permit any action or claim to the effect that any treatment, exploitation or use of such Writing or other materials, infringes the Winner's moral rights.
- 1.6 The Winner acknowledges that no further remuneration or compensation other than that provided for in terms of the prize will be due.
- 1.7 The Winner undertakes to execute all documents, make all applications, give all assistance and do all acts and things, at the expense of the Charity and at any time either during or after the competition, as may, in the opinion of the Charity, be necessary or desirable to vest the Intellectual Property Rights or copyright in the name of the Charity and to defend the Charity against claims that works embodying Intellectual Property Rights or copyright infringe third party rights, and otherwise to protect and maintain the Intellectual Property Rights or copyright in the Writing
- 1.8 The relationship of the Winner to the Charity is of a winner of the Competition and nothing in this Agreement shall render him an employee, worker, agent, or partner of the Charity in any legal jurisdiction and the Winner shall not hold himself out as such. As a consequence, the Charity is not liable for any local income tax, national insurance and social security contributions or local equivalent and any other liability, deduction, contribution, assessment, or claim arising from or made in connection with the payment of the prize.

6. GDPR

a) General

ME Research UK is aware of its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and is committed to processing your data securely and transparently. This Privacy Notice sets out, in line with GDPR, the types of data that we collect and hold on you as an Entrant. It also sets out how we use that information, how long we keep it for, and other relevant information about your data.

6.1. Data Controller Details

The charity is a data controller, meaning that it determines the processes to be used when using your personal data. our contact details are as follows: ME Research UK, 6 Atholl Crescent, Perth, PH1 5JN.

6.2. Data Protection Principles

In relation to your personal data, we will:

- a. process it fairly, lawfully and in a clear, transparent way,
- b. collect your data only for reasons that we find proper for the competition process,
- c. only use it in the way that we have told you about,
- d. ensure it is correct and up to date,
- e. keep your data for only as long as we need it,
- f. process it in a way that ensures it will not be used for anything that you are not aware of or have not consented to (as appropriate).

6.3. Types of Data We Process

As part of the Competition process you may supply to us and we will process many types of data about you, including:

- a. your personal details including your name, address, institution address, email address, phone numbers,
- b. information you may include in the Application Form or disclose otherwise e.g. education history

6.4. How we Collect Your Data

- a. we collect data about you in a variety of ways. Principally the information provided on the competition Application form, or notes made by our Trustees and/or staff during the competition.
- b. further information will be collected directly from you in the event of being a winner e.g. your bank details.

6.5. Why we process your data

The law on data protection allows us to process your data for certain reasons only and, in relation to the Competition :

- a. in order to carry out legally required duties,
- b. in order for us to carry out our legitimate interests,
- c. to protect your interests.

All of the processing carried out by us falls into one of the permitted reasons. Generally, we will rely on the reasons set out above to process your data.

We need to collect your data to ensure we are complying with legal requirements. we also collect data so that we can carry out activities which are in the legitimate interests of the charity. We have set these out below:

- a. administering the competition.
- b. making decisions about whom to award a prize.

- c. communicating the outcome.
- d. making payment of the prizes.
- e. disseminating the results.
- f. publishing in any form felt necessary, the Writing.
- g. retaining records to fulfil legal duties and to combat any actions brought.

Your data will be shared with colleagues within the charity where it is necessary for them to undertake their duties. This includes, for example, the staff members responsible for screening entries for compliance with competition rules and entry requirements, blinding submissions, publishing the results, and making payment of the Prizes.

6.6. Deletion of Data

ME Research UK will retain data on all Entrants until the competition is judged and a Winner chosen and communicated with. We cannot estimate the exact time period, but we will consider this period definitely over when the Winner's Writing is published in Breakthrough. We may delete Entrant's details before that point. When that period is over, we will delete your data.

In the case of Winners, we will retain the data for the for as long as legally required bearing in mind that the Writing may remain in printed form or in electronic form for many, many years.

6.7. Data legitimately collected during the competition

We process the data you supplied us with in relation to the competition on our office 365 system which complies with EU data protection laws, and we will not share data with anyone else. Here is a link to our privacy policy: <https://www.mereseach.org.uk/privacy-policy/>. In this policy, you will find information about our compliance with GDPR (data protection law.) you can find how to send us a request to let you access your data that we have collected, request us to delete your data, correct any inaccuracies or restrict our processing of your data. You have the right to lodge a complaint about the way we handle your data with the Information Commissioner.

b) Specific

Entrant

The Entrant consents to ME Research UK collecting, storing and processing such personal data/information as I may supply to it (in whatever format), including (but not limited to) my full name, address, contact details (including e-mail address(es), telephone number(s) and such other information which is required by banking, regulatory, legal and tax authorities. The information to be held for use in administering the Charity's writing competition, for facilitating contact between me and the charity, transfer of data in respect of judging and administering the competition, and payment of prizes.

In the event of being a Winner, I consent to my name being associated with the prize and published in written and electronic format.

I acknowledge that I may withdraw or alter this consent at any time in writing but that it may be that such amendment renders it impossible or impractical to administer the competition and I may be disqualified. I also acknowledge that although ME Research UK can delete data on its systems third parties may not and ME Research UK will be under no duty to pursue third parties for deletion. Furthermore, the Charity will not be obliged to cease using or destroy printed materials already ordered or printed but undertake not to order reprints which include the data in question.

Full details of ME Research UK's privacy policy is available on our website – <http://www.meresearch.org.uk/privacy-policy/> – with an abridged Article 14 GDPR notice contained herewith and I confirm that I have read and accepted the same.

Winners

In addition to the Entrant GDPR consent

In the event of being a Winner I do hereby consent to ME Research UK of 6 Atholl Crescent, Perth, PH1 5JN (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation No SC036942)) collecting, storing and processing for use on social media, in publicity, and statutory materials and ME Research UK's website my image.

I acknowledge that I may withdraw or alter this consent at any time in writing. I also acknowledge that although ME Research UK can delete data on its systems, third parties may not.

I acknowledge being informed that my winning is not dependent on granting this consent.

2. General

If any provision of this Agreement (or part of any provision) is found by any court or other authority of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, that provision or part-provision shall, to the extent required, be deemed not to form part of this Agreement and the validity and enforceability of the other provisions of this Agreement shall not be affected.

This Agreement and any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with it or its subject matter or formation (including non-contractual disputes or claims) shall be governed by and construed in accordance with Scots law. The parties irrevocably agree that the courts of Scotland shall have exclusive jurisdiction to settle any dispute or claim that arises out of or in connection with this Agreement or its subject matter or formation (including non-contractual disputes or claims).