Application for the BALR Ordinary Committee Member | Dr Simon Lea

Personal Statement

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to serve as an Ordinary Committee Member of the British Association for Lung Research. The BALR has an important role in bringing together respiratory scientists across basic, translational and clinical research, and my primary motivation is to help strengthen those connections. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the BALR's future programme and strategic direction, while supporting the activities that sustain an active and inclusive research network.

My research career has centred on translational respiratory science, particularly COPD, airway inflammation, macrophage and neutrophil biology, host-pathogen interactions and, increasingly, the effects of environmental exposures on lung health. I work across disciplinary boundaries, connecting mechanistic laboratory research with clinically characterised patient samples, exposure science and therapeutic development. I believe this breadth would provide a useful perspective to the BALR, particularly in shaping scientific meetings that encourage exchange between basic, translational and clinical researchers.

I already have a growing involvement with the BALR. Having given an invited talk at the 2026 Summer Meeting on environmental imprinting and macrophage dysfunction in COPD, I am now coordinating the 2027 Summer Meeting in Manchester. I would be keen to build on this involvement by supporting future scientific meetings and webinars and helping the BALR develop programmes that are scientifically strong, collaborative and relevant to emerging areas of respiratory research.

I would also bring directly relevant experience of scientific review and committee decision-making. As a member of the North West Lung Centre Charity Science Committee, I review, score and rank research applications and contribute to discussions around funding priorities and scientific direction. I have also reviewed UKRI/MRC funding applications and external PhD applications. Alongside this, I have broader committee and leadership experience, contributing to respiratory research strategy in Manchester and chairing university and school governance committees. Together, these experiences would translate well to the BALR's funding review, strategic and wider committee responsibilities.

A further priority would be strengthening translational and patient-relevant research within the BALR and supporting environmental exposure and lung health as an increasingly important area of respiratory research. Through the MRC Centre of Research Excellence in Exposome Immunology, I am building connections between exposure science, immunology and respiratory disease that I would be keen to extend across the wider respiratory community. I would also welcome opportunities to support early-career members through the BALR's scientific meetings and wider activities, building on my experience in postgraduate tutoring, PhD supervision, mentoring and professional coaching. I would aim to contribute constructively and collegially, supporting researchers across career stages and disciplines. I can commit fully to the quarterly committee meetings, AGM and wider responsibilities and would be genuinely pleased to help shape the BALR's next phase.