

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Conflicts of interest\* exist when at least one author has ties to activities such as financial relationship with industry (through investments, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria) either directly or through immediate family. For manuscripts involving work on products supported, wholly or partly, by commercial companies, authors must disclose this fact under this statement.

**Title of Manuscript:** .....

**Date:** .....

### No conflict

The author(s) certify that they have no affiliation with or financial involvement in any organisation or entity with a direct financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in the manuscript (e.g., employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria), except as disclosed in an attachment or cover letter. Any research or project support is identified in the 'Acknowledgment' section of the manuscript.

.....  
(Signature of the first/corresponding author on behalf of all authors)

### Conflicts of interest disclosure

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
Signature(s):

\* information for authors of conflicts of interest – next page (2)

# Information for authors of conflicts of interest

## 1. Conflicts of Interest

Public trust in the peer review process and the credibility of published articles depend in part on how well conflict of interest is handled during writing, peer review, and editorial decision making.

Conflict of interest exists when an author (or the author's institution), reviewer, or editor has financial or personal relationships that inappropriately influence (bias) his or her actions (such relationships are also known as dual commitments, competing interests, or competing loyalties). These relationships vary from those with negligible potential to those with great potential to influence judgment, and not all relationships represent true conflict of interest. The potential for conflict of interest can exist whether or not an individual believes that the relationship affects his or her scientific judgment. Financial relationships (such as employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony) are the most easily identifiable conflicts of interest and the most likely to undermine the credibility of the journal, the authors, and of science itself. However, conflicts can occur for other reasons, such as personal relationships, academic competition, and intellectual passion.

All participants in the peer review and publication process must disclose all relationships that could be viewed as presenting a potential conflict of interest. Disclosure of these relationships is also important in connection with editorials and review articles, because it is can be more difficult to detect bias in these types of publications than in reports of original research. Editors may use information disclosed in conflict of interest and financial interest statements as a basis for editorial decisions. Editors should publish this information if they believe it is important in judging the manuscript.

## 2. Potential Conflicts of Interest Related to Individual Authors' Commitments

When authors submit a manuscript, whether an article or a letter, they are responsible for disclosing all financial and personal relationships that might bias their work. To prevent ambiguity, authors must state explicitly whether potential conflicts do or do not exist. Authors should do so in the manuscript on a conflict of interest notification page that follows the title page, providing additional detail, if necessary, in a cover letter that accompanies the manuscript. (See *Section IV.A.3. Conflict of Interest Notification Page*)

Investigators must disclose potential conflicts to study participants and should state in the manuscript whether they have done so.

Editors also need to decide when to publish information disclosed by authors about potential conflicts. If doubt exists, it is best to err on the side of publication.

## 3. Potential Conflicts of Interest Related to Project Support

Increasingly, individual studies receive funding from commercial firms, private foundations, and government. The conditions of this funding have the potential to bias and otherwise discredit the research.

Scientists have an ethical obligation to submit creditable research results for publication. Moreover, as the persons directly responsible for their work, researchers should not enter into agreements that interfere with their access to the

data and their ability to analyze it independently, to prepare manuscripts, and to publish them. Authors should describe the role of the study sponsor(s), if any, in study design; in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; in the writing of the report; and in the decision to submit the report for publication. If the supporting source had no such involvement, the authors should so state. Biases potentially introduced when sponsors are directly involved in research are analogous to methodological biases of other sorts. Some journals, therefore, choose to include information about the sponsor's involvement in the methods section.

Editors may request that authors of a study funded by an agency with a proprietary or financial interest in the outcome sign a statement such as, "I had full access to all of the data in this study and I take complete responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis." Editors should be encouraged to review copies of the protocol and/or contracts associated with project-specific studies before accepting such studies for publication. Editors may choose not to consider an article if a sponsor has asserted control over the authors' right to publish.

## 4. Potential Conflicts of Interest Related to Commitments of Editors, Journal Staff, or Reviewers

Editors should avoid selecting external peer reviewers with obvious potential conflicts of interest, for example, those who work in the same department or institution as any of the authors. Authors often provide editors with the names of persons they feel should not be asked to review a manuscript because of potential conflicts of interest, usually professional. When possible, authors should be asked to explain or justify their concerns; that information is important to editors in deciding whether to honor such requests.

Reviewers must disclose to editors any conflicts of interest that could bias their opinions of the manuscript, and they should disqualify themselves from reviewing specific manuscripts if they believe it to be appropriate. As in the case of authors, silence on the part of reviewers concerning potential conflicts may mean either that such conflicts exist that they have failed to disclose, or that conflicts do not exist. Reviewers must therefore also be asked to state explicitly whether conflicts do or do not exist. Reviewers must not use knowledge of the work, before its publication, to further their own interests.

Editors who make final decisions about manuscripts must have no personal, professional, or financial involvement in any of the issues they might judge. Other members of the editorial staff, if they participate in editorial decisions, must provide editors with a current description of their financial interests (as they might relate to editorial judgments) and disqualify themselves from any decisions where they have a conflict of interest. Editorial staff must not use the information gained through working with manuscripts for private gain. Editors should publish regular disclosure statements about potential conflicts of interests related to the commitments of journal staff.

*Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts  
Submitted to Biomedical Journals:  
Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication  
Updated October 2005  
International Committee of Medical Journal Editors*