

ANNALS OF FAMILY MEDICINE



Conflict of Interest Policy

Background

The *Annals of Family Medicine* aims to follow the highest standards of scientific and publishing ethics. We strive to maintain formal, transparent, effective practices that foster fair and unbiased processes for reviewing, evaluating, and publishing original work.

Conflicts of interest are defined as, “conditions in which an individual holds conflicting or competing interests that could bias editorial decisions. Conflicts of interest may be only potential or perceived, or they may be factual.” [1] The potential for bias can arise from conflicts of interest among authors, reviewers, and editors.

Policy Statements

1) Author Conflict of Interest

Manuscripts should include a statement of all potential, perceived, or real conflicts of interest for each author. Conflicts may include, but are not limited to, personal, professional, or financial relationships with manufacturers of products mentioned in the manuscript or manufacturers of competing products. When authors have no potential conflicts of interest, they should so state.

2) Author Independence

Authors should have full access to and control of study data. The decision to submit a manuscript for publication should rest with authors and not study sponsors. Manuscripts should include a statement identifying the organizations that provided support for the research, and the role of those organizations in the study design, data collection, analysis or interpretation of data, and writing or submitting the manuscript. If the sponsors had no such roles, the manuscript should so state.

3) Reviewer Conflict of Interest

Reviewers should notify the *Annals* office of any potential, perceived, or real conflicts of interest related to the manuscript or authors. These may include personal, professional or financial conflicts of interest. In some cases, if a reviewer believes that s/he can provide an objective review, the editor may allow the reviewer’s participation.

4) Editorial Conflict of Interest

A. Evaluation of Editors’ Manuscripts

The *Annals* benefits from including active investigators and authors on its editorial team. A potential conflict of interest occurs when an editor is an author of a submitted manuscript. In

such cases, the editor/author will have no access to the manuscript, peer reviews, or any aspect of the decision-making process. Upon submission, editorial staff will implement a block in the journal's web-based peer review system which denies the editor/author access to the manuscript and all phases of the peer review and decision-making processes. The peer review and decision-making processes will be managed by an editor who has no involvement in the manuscript.

B. Other Editorial Competing Interests

The editors will disclose on an annual basis any significant financial competing interests or declare that they have none. If editors have any competing interests (e.g., personal/professional relationships, or personal values that would interfere with their editorial judgment and function) with any manuscript to which they have been assigned, they will disclose this to the *Annals* Editor. Editors will recuse themselves from decision-making for any manuscript with which they have a conflict of interest.

References

1. Council of Science Editors. CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications, p. 8. http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/editorial_policies/white_paper.cfm . Accessed on 4/17/07.

Recommended Resource

Council of Science Editors. CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications. Available at: http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/editorial_policies/white_paper.cfm .

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