

Conflict-of-Interest Policy for Editors of Clinical Chemistry

BACKGROUND

There has been concern over the increasing inter-relationships between practitioners in the medical field and the commercial suppliers of drugs, devices, equipment, etc. to the medical profession. These concerns led the National Institute of Health (NIH) in 1995 to require official institutional review of financial disclosure by researchers and management of situations in which disclosure indicates potential conflicts of interest and/or conflicts of effort. Such concerns have led institutions such as the NIH to dramatically alter the rules regarding conflict of interest for intramural employees (news release, August 25, 2005) and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to draw up formal guidelines concerning this issue. (A report of the AAMC – AAU Advisory Committee on Financial Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research; AAMC, February 2008.)

The numerous reports of practicing physicians, academic physicians, and medical association leaders involved in publishing articles written by "ghost writers" in the employ of drug manufacturers, the leaking of information to companies by peer reviewers, e.g., *Nature*; 45, 31 June 2008, and the excessive consulting fees paid to physicians utilizing particular medical devices, e.g., *NY Times*, March 21, 2007, Jan 30, 2008, have all raised serious issues concerning conflict of interest in the medical profession.

It is the view of the AACC that relationships between experts and the medical device and services industry have been of value in developing and evaluating improvements in medical care. However, the AACC strongly believes that full disclosure of such activities and a system of minimizing their ability to lead to conflict of interest is essential for the integrity of the field of clinical chemistry. The following policy was developed to address the responsibilities of the Editor-in-Chief, Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, and Section Editors of *Clinical Chemistry*.¹

POLICY

1. Definition of potential conflict of interest:

For the purposes of this policy, potential conflicts of interest are defined to include:

1.1 Financial relationships with entities that provide diagnostic products or services and which exceed \$1000/per year:

1.1.1 Stock holdings or equity

1.1.2 Compensation for consulting, speaking engagements, or other services

1.1.3 Royalties

1.1.4 All forms of research or clinical support (including support from commercial entities, foundations, and government agencies)

1.2 Any licenses that may lead to healthcare products or services

1.3 Any stock options in companies that may provide healthcare products or services.

¹ This policy was developed by a Task Force at the request of Nader Rifai, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief of Clinical Chemistry. Members of the Task Force were Carl Burtis, Ph.D., Chair, David Bruns, M.D.; Jack Ladenson, Ph.D., and Matthew McQueen, M.D.

- 1.4 Any filed or approved patents relevant to any fields covered by the Journal.
- 1.5 Positions of influence, paid or unpaid, in companies that provide health care products or services (e.g. Board of Directors, Advisory Boards, etc.).
- 1.6 Publication-level editorial obligation (i.e., primary decision-making roles) on other research or clinical journals
- 1.7 Leadership positions in professional societies
- 1.8 Any of the above relationships on the part of an editor's spouse, committed partner, or dependent child.

2. Scope

The policy applies to Editors-in-Chief, Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, and Section Editors. These individuals must declare and list all their potential conflicts of interest as enumerated above annually or more frequently if warranted and in writing.

3. Management of review of disclosure of potential conflict of interest

3.1 Internal disclosure

- 3.1.1 The Board of Directors shall be responsible for annual review of the disclosure form of the Editor-in-Chief and shall develop if necessary a program to manage the potential conflict of interest so as to minimize its impact on Journal operations
- 3.1.2 The Editor-in-Chief shall annually review the disclosure form of the Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, and Section Editors and shall develop if necessary a program to manage potential conflicts of interest so as to minimize their impact on Journal operations.
- 3.1.3 The Editor-in-Chief, Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, Section Editors and other Editorial Board members shall not be involved in the review or decision process for papers coming from authors at their own institutions.
- 3.1.4 The Management process may include but is not limited to:
 - 3.1.3.1 Determining that there is no conflict of interest
 - 3.1.3.2 Eliminating the individuals from decision processes on a selected basis or on a broader topic of interest
 - 3.1.3.3 Determining that the conflict of interest is too great for the individual to continue in their capacity with the Journal

3.2 Public disclosure

This policy shall be public knowledge on <http://www.clinchem.org> and in the Information for Authors

4. Confidentiality requirement

Editors are prohibited from making use of information gained during the handling of manuscripts for any purpose other than editorial decision making.

5. Communication of Policy to Editors

The Editor-in-Chief shall inform the editors of the Conflict-of- Interest Policy before their appointment and at least annually thereafter.

6. Additional policies

The Editor-in-Chief may implement additional policies pertaining to conflict of interest, as long as those policies are consistent with the policies set forth in this document.

Adopted by the AACC Board of Directors at their meeting on September 12-13, 2008.