

Editorial

Active Management of Financial Conflicts of Interest on the Editorial Board of CORR

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At *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*®, we have tried to mitigate the impact of financial conflict of interest (COI) through robust disclosure, which we require of authors upon manuscript submission, and of editors as a condition of their participation on our Editorial Board.

However, there is ample evidence [7, 8] that simple disclosure of financial COI does not alleviate its influence. In fact, there is evidence [3, 5, 6] that disclosure alone has contrary effects. Given these issues, how we disclose and manage financial COI reflects on our integrity as clinicians and scientists, and affects our professional reputation in the eyes of the public [1, 2, 4].

Importantly, while an author's financial conflicts may bias the presentation and, perhaps, even the results of a

study, unmanaged financial COI on an editorial board may influence the development of the scientific literature by affecting what is and is not published.

Currently, *CORR*'s financial conflict of interest policy focuses on disclosure. Like many journals, our Senior Editors' financial disclosure forms are kept current, are maintained on file, and are available upon request to anyone who wishes to see them. In addition, our Senior Editors are asked to recuse themselves from manuscripts if the editor or anyone in his/her family has a financial relationship relevant to the topic of the study.

Upon deeper consideration, we believe our standards should be more rigorous. Therefore, we have enacted the following changes, which we believe will improve the depth and transparency of our disclosures, and will allow authors the opportunity to participate in the management of editorial-board level financial COI as it might influence the processing of their work:

- Our Senior Editors and the Editor-in-Chief will update their financial disclosure forms annually at a minimum. These disclosures will include full "*CORR*® disclosures" (with dollar values), just as we ask of our authors.

The authors certify that they, or any members of their immediate family, have no commercial associations (eg, consultancies, stock ownership, equity interest, patent/licensing arrangements, etc) that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted article.

All ICMJE Conflict of Interest Forms for authors and *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*® editors and board members are on file with the publication and can be viewed on request. The opinions expressed are those of the writers, and do not reflect the opinion or policy of *CORR*® or the Association of Bone and Joint Surgeons®.

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- We will disclose all the financial conflicts of our Senior Editors and Editor-in-Chief, including medicolegal consulting, society-related financial relationships, and compensated work with other publishers for the last 12 months.
- We will print these disclosures in every issue of *CORR*®. They will be posted online at www.clinorthop.org, and on our publisher's website, <http://www.springer.com/medicine/orthopedics/journal/11999>, rather than simply making them available upon request.
- Importantly, effective January 2014, we will permit the corresponding author of a manuscript to request one or more Senior Editors be disqualified from involvement with the processing of that paper, if the author believes that any of our Senior Editors has a relevant financial conflict of interest pertaining to the material presented in the manuscript.
- Authors who wish to request the disqualification of one or more Senior Editors for financial COI reasons should do so at the time of manuscript submission, by making the request in the electronic cover letter that accompanies the paper. This will be a confidential process and the Senior Editor(s) in question will not be aware of the disqualification request.

Although we are proud of these changes, they do not solve the problem entirely. Financial conflicts of interest are not the only kind of influence that may affect the processing of original research—every reviewer and editor brings to the task his or her experiences, knowledge, and beliefs, and these intellectual conflicts may be as important, or more important, than financial relationships. However, such influences are hard to identify, and we expect our editors and reviewers to do what they can to recognize and avoid such biases. Since more than one editor is involved with the processing of every paper, this should mitigate the influence of any such “intellectual conflicts of interest,” should these occur.

Finally, it is worth noting that our panel of Senior Editors is modest in size, and so the removal of a particular Senior Editor from involvement with a manuscript may result in another Senior Editor with less specific subject-matter

expertise becoming involved with the paper. We believe this is offset by our high-quality roster of expert peer-reviewers, and by our Deputy Editors, who can address any subject-matter-specific questions or concerns that arise.

We believe that by publishing Senior Editors' financial relationships prominently (in each issue of our journal and online), and by providing authors the opportunity to disqualify a Senior Editor because of such a relationship, we are introducing a level of transparency to the peer-review process and fairness to authors that are important to preserve the integrity of orthopaedic science. We hope other journals will consider steps like the ones we are taking at *CORR*®, which will provide a higher quality of disclosure, and, critically, will allow authors to help us actively manage financial conflicts of interest among the editors at our journal who make manuscript disposition decisions.

And, as always, we welcome feedback on this and all of our editorial policies. Please email us at eic@clinorthop.org.

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