

Declarations of Funding and Competing Interest

Science needs to be beyond reproach, particularly when financial vested interests operate, such as in nicotine and tobacco research. The presence of undeclared sources of support and financial interests has the potential to undermine the credibility of published work regardless of whether or not the financial factors are linked to tobacco or non-tobacco industries. The issue of credibility is especially relevant in the charged political environment in which this work is published.

Authors of manuscripts submitted for peer review in biomedical science journals are now routinely required to declare potential conflicts of interest. Much has been written recently about the definition of conflict of interest, ways to assess it, and methods of reporting it. The “Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals,” a document developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, provides us with a basis for editorial policy:

“A conflict of interest exists when professional judgment concerning a primary interest (such as patients’ welfare or the validity of research) may be influenced by a secondary interest (such as financial gain). Perceptions of conflict of interest are as important as actual conflicts of interest.”

Both financial and non-financial conflicts of interest may exist. The revised guidelines continue:

“Financial relationships (such as employment, consultancies, stock ownership or options, honoraria, patents, and 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 or rivalries, academic competition, and intellectual beliefs. Authors should avoid entering in to agreements with study sponsors, both for-profit and non-profit, that interfere with authors’ access to all of the study’s data or that interfere with their ability to analyze and interpret the data and to prepare and publish manuscripts independently when and where they choose.”

The policy of *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* is to require all participants in the peer-review and publication process (i.e., authors, Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, and reviewers) to consider their conflicts of interest and disclose all relationships that could be viewed as potential conflicts of interest.

Nicotine & Tobacco Research has also adopted the following procedural steps concerning the issue of potential conflict of interest:

- Authors of Original Investigations, Brief Reports, Reviews, Letters, and Commentaries must include a funding section specifying sources of funding for all authors for the work represented in the manuscript. In addition to disclosure of direct financial support, all authors must disclose any competing interests in a Competing Interests section.
- Authors of original empirical studies are also required to declare that they have had full access to all of the data in the study and take responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis. This latter requirement is especially important for industry-sponsored research studies in which the author is not an employee of the sponsoring company.

- At the point of manuscript submission, authors must indicate whether or not the text was reviewed by the sponsor prior to submission (i.e., if the study was written with full investigator access to all relevant data and if the sponsor exerted editorial influence over the written text). Authors also must confirm that the manuscript is not under review—and will not be under review—by another publication whilst it is being considered by *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*.
- Editors and reviewers of papers submitted to *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* should declare potential competing interests. Editors should recuse themselves from handling any manuscripts for which they have a real or perceived competing interest, and reviewers should decline to review any manuscripts for which they have a real or perceived competing interest.

In the event that a previously undisclosed funding source or potential competing interest for an author of a published article comes to the attention of the editors and is subsequently confirmed with the authors, the undeclared information will be published as an erratum in a future issue. This applies to all papers submitted after December 2001.

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