Cochrane’s revised Conflict of Interest Policy – what you need to know

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Ruth Foxlee

‘New’ policy

• 2014 Commercial Sponsorship Policy
  ○ Conflicts of interest and Cochrane Reviews in the Editorial and Publishing Policy Resource (EPPR)

• 2020 revision - Cochrane Conflict of Interest Policy for Cochrane Library Content
Why have we revised the policy?

- Cochrane’s Governing Board requested a review of the policy
- Conflict of Interest (COI) polices should be revised regularly and this was built in to the 2014 policy
- Our COI policy is key to maintaining our reputation for independence and credibility
- Creating content according to a rigorous COI policy can strengthen reader confidence
What hasn’t changed

Review funding

- **Cochrane Reviews cannot be funded** by commercial organizations with a financial interest in the topic of a review

Authorship

- People **employed by a commercial organization** with financial interest in the review topic are still prohibited from authorship
- **First authors** must be free of all conflicts
- **No threshold for financial conflict**
What’s changed

- **Narrower policy scope** – for people involved in producing Cochrane Library content only (companion policy to be developed)

- \( \geq 67\% \) (two-thirds) of the author team must be free of all financial conflicts vs. >50% in the 2014 policy

- **The last author** as well as the first author must be free of all financial conflicts

- Restrictions on what role **people who have been involved in eligible studies** can play in a Cochrane review
What’s changed

- Management strategy for cases where not-for-profit organizations employ Cochrane authors, or fund reviews and could be considered to have a specific interest in the outcome of the review
- Wilful failure to disclose relevant conflicts of interest, will be considered a form of scientific misconduct
- All Cochrane Review Group and Editorial and Methods Department staff should be free from relevant financial conflicts of interest
What’s been made clearer?

- How to deal with payments that are made to the individual’s home institution rather than to them personally.
- The requirements for declarations of interest when reviews are updated and when new authors are added.
- The timeframes in which conflicts are considered current – 36 months prior to title registration through to publication.
- That a peer reviewer with a direct financial interest associated with a review cannot be involved in review.
- The responsibilities of authors and of Cochrane Review Groups and Editorial and Methods Department.
Policy launch date?

• Official launch date = date the policy comes into affect
• Planning to launch in October 1 2020
• Dependent on integrating the declaration of interest (DOI) form into editorial management systems
• Revised DOI form
Applying the policy to CDSR content

- The 2020 policy will apply to all new Cochrane Review titles registered after October 1 2020
- The 2020 policy will apply to all Cochrane Review where the update begins after October 1 2020
- The 2014 policy will apply to ANY work that started before policy launch - i.e., titles registered, protocols underway or published, reviews underway and updates underway
Applying the policy to CDSR content
Applying the policy: responsibilities

• Authors – providing timely, accurate and consistent declarations throughout the review lifecycle

• CRGs – should not allow titles submitted after policy launch, to be registered unless the author team complies with the new policy

• CRGs – ensure that the author teams for updates that begin after policy launch, comply with the new policy

• EMD – checking other Cochrane Library content (i.e., editorials and Cochrane Clinical Answers)
Implementation period

- Research Integrity senior editor & editor + other EMD staff working together as ‘COI implementation team’
- COI Policy Implementation Working Group
- Webpage for all COI policy information (incl. 2014 and 2020 policies)
- Developing supporting materials
- Training events
Training

- Virtual workshops for CRG Managing Editors
- Another introductory webinar - TBA
- Targeted training – e.g. CRG Networks
- Post launch – webinars as needed
Resources

- Online learning modules based on real COI scenarios
- Webinars recordings
- FAQs
- Decision trees/flowcharts
- Information about case referral and appeals process documentation/workflow
- Tools for authors
- Integration COI policy into staff induction packages (PSD)
More information

COI Portal - http://conflictofinterest.cochrane.org/
Email - COIarbiter@cochrane.org