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

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Old vs. ‘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) policies 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.

- All **Cochrane Review Group and Editorial and Methods Department** staff should be free from relevant financial conflicts of interest.

- **Wilful failure to disclose** relevant conflicts of interest, will be considered a form of scientific misconduct.
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 July 2020
- Dependent on implementing a single Declaration of interest (DOI) entry point to support policy implementation
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has proposed a revised DOI form
Applying the policy to CDSR content

- The 2020 policy will apply to all new Cochrane Review titles registered after July 2020
- The 2020 policy will apply to all Cochrane Review where the update begins after July 2020
- The 2014 policy will apply to any work that started before policy launch (date TBA) - 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 team (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

- Today! – introductory webinar (CRG focus)
- June 10 – introductory webinar (wider community)
- More intro webinars - TBA
- Targeted training – e.g. Networks
- Post launch – webinars as needed
- October – Toronto Colloquium workshop proposal submitted
Resources

- Online learning modules based on real COI scenarios
- Webinars recordings
- FAQs
- Decision flowcharts
- Annotated policy ‘guide’ – what’s new/ what’s changed
- Information about case referral and appeals process documentation/workflow
- Integration into PSD staff induction packages
More information

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