

Competing interests

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What is
a competing interest?

A competing 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 or personal rivalry).

It may arise when authors have a financial interest that may influence - *probably without their knowing* - their interpretation of their results or those of others.

Who can have a competing interest?

- Editors
- Authors
- Referees
- Editorial board members
- Owners of the journal

Journal policy

- To make the best decision on how to deal with a paper the editor should know about the authors' competing interest.
- We are not aiming at eradicating competing interests - they are almost inevitable.
- We will not reject papers simply because you have a competing interest, but we will make a declaration on whether or not you have competing interests.

Questions to answer

- Have you in the past five years accepted the following from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the results of your study or the conclusions of your review, editorial, or letter
- _____ Reimbursement for attending a symposium?
- _____ A fee for speaking?

Questions to answer

- _____ A fee for organising education?
- _____ Funds for research?
- _____ Funds for a member of staff?
- _____ Fees for consulting?

More questions

- Have you in the past five years been employed by an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the results of your study or the conclusions of your review, editorial, or letter?
- Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the results of your study or the conclusions of your review, editorial, or letter?

More questions

- Have you acted as an expert witness on the subject of your study, review, editorial, or letter?
- Do you have any other competing financial interests? If so, please specify.

Non financial competing interests

- A close relationship with, or a strong antipathy to, a person whose interests may be affected by publication of your paper
- An academic link or rivalry with somebody whose interests may be affected by publication of the paper

Non financial competing interests

- Membership of a political party or special interest group whose interests may be affected by publication of your paper
- A deep personal or religious conviction that may have affected what you wrote and that readers should be aware of when reading your paper

Unsolicited submissions or offers

We ask very direct questions to potential authors

Have you been asked by a drug company to write this article?

Will you be paid by a third party for this article?

Dealing with competing interests

- We advise authors to “always declare” a possible competing interest
- Let readers decide how important these are
- Declaring a competing interest after publication usually makes an author look guilty

Dealing with competing interests

- Editors should declare their own competing interests first
- As should board members
- And owners of the journal
- Ask referees to declare too
- Transparency is the best policy
- If in doubt – declare

"I have taken money from all drug companies who manufacture antiepileptic drugs. So how can I have a competing interest?"

"I have taken money from XYZ Pharma.
But this has in no way affected my
judgment."

Author of unpublished article on
preventing obesity.

“I am fat.”

Thank you