Fourth National Integrity in Science Conference
Common Standard for Journals’ Conflict of Interest Disclosure Panel Discussion
July 11, 2008

Hugh A. Tilson, Editor-in-Chief
Environmental Health Perspectives
Evolution of COI Policy at EHP

• 1994
  - Instructions to Authors mentions ethical problems will be addressed during the review process
  - Scientific integrity is considered as part of the manuscript review process
  - Financial COI guidance given to authors of conference, symposium, and workshop reports

• 2001
  - Instructions to Authors now includes section on COI
  - Disclosure of potential financial COI is expected from authors
    - included in Acknowledgments
Evolution of COI Policy at EHP

• 2002
  - Reviewers must disclose COI to EIC
  - In the event of COI, a reviewer may not review certain papers
  - Submissions must include a written COI Declaration Form

• 2003
  - Full disclosure of financial COI becomes policy. No time limits, no amounts, real or apparent
  - As a condition of review and publication, authors should certify that research is not compromised by controlling sponsor
  - Disclosure does not influence possible review or publication
  - If authors choose not to disclose, that will be noted in the Acknowledgments of the paper
Evolution of COI Policy at EHP

- 2003 Continued
  - Full disclosure extends to reviewers and editors
  - Enforcement
    - through feedback from readers and authors’ own employers
    - publication of letters to the editor that address alleged inaccuracies of financial COI
Center for Science in the Public Interest Report, July 2004

- Study conducted from December 2003 through February 2004
- CSPI sampled 37 articles published in *EHP*
- Investigated 65 first and last authors in 35 studies for which there was no COI disclosure
- Found 3 articles where COI should have been disclosed
  - In each case, authors stood to gain financially from publication of the article
  - Results could affect the authors’ funding from sources in the future
- No consequences for failure to disclose
“Embracing Scrutiny,” EHP

Editorial

by EIC Thomas Goehl, October 2004

- Discussed lessons learned
- Emphasized the issue of perception and potential for COI
- Announced guidance to future authors to err on the side of caution
- Announced new policy for failure to disclose COI
EHP Enforcement Policy

- 3-year ban of authors found to “willfully fail to disclose competing financial interests”
- If competing interests would have caused rejection of the original manuscript, article will be retracted
- If article is not retracted but an ethical breach has occurred, an Expression of Concern will be written and published in the journal and added to the online version of the article
Attempts to Develop Common Standards Governing COI

• ACS. Ethical guidelines to publication of chemical research. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society; 2006.


Key Principles for COI Guidelines

• Disclosure of real or apparent COI does not preclude submission or publication of papers
• Disclosure required for all peer-reviewed papers, reviews, editorials, commentaries, book reviews, news articles
• Research must not have been compromised by controlling sponsor
• Authors’ responsibilities
  - Full disclosure of all relevant financial COI
    ▪ Real or apparent financial information
    ▪ Time-dependent (e.g., 3 years)
  - All authors must certify COI
  - Disclaimer published with paper
Key Principles for COI Guidelines

- Editors and reviewers should declare potential COI to EIC
- Journal editorial staff should avoid all financial relationships that could be viewed as COI
- Firewall exists between publishing and business side of journal
- Non-financial COI
  - Personal relationships
  - Prior professional relationships
  - Prior expression of opinion relevant to subject
  - Academic relationships
  - Membership in relevant societies or group
- Enforcement policy