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Dear Mr. Marcetich,

The Integrity in Science project at the Center for Science in the Public Interest has discovered that the June supplement to the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* failed to meet your guidelines for indexing in MEDLINE. Specifically, the supplement was sponsored by the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Sodium Committee, whose members include corporations such as Heinz, Kraft, Frito-Lay and Procter & Gamble. The editor of this sponsored supplement, Alexander G. Logan of Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, is a paid consultant to the salt industry. This was not disclosed in the supplement.

Similarly, a number of authors of articles in the supplement had financial ties to salt producers, the Salt Institute (the industry trade group), or ILSI. None of these ties were disclosed to readers of the supplement, either.

Your guidelines state:

Supplements or other publications that indicate funding derived from private, for-profit organizations will not be routinely indexed for MEDLINE unless certain conditions are met. A disclosure statement should be included within the text of each article that might be cited for MEDLINE, preferably on the title page of the article, that indicates any financial relationship that each author has with the funding source and with any product discussed or implied in the text of the article.

Since the articles in this supplement did not adhere to these guidelines, I am requesting that you withdraw them from the MEDLINE index.

Sincerely,

Merrill Goozner
Director, Integrity in Science Project
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Follow-up e-mail: 10/24/2006

From: Merrill Goozner, mgoozner@cspinet.org

To: James Marcetich, james_marcetich@nlm.nih.gov

Subject: Indexing Supplements -- your proposed new rules

Dear Mr. Marcetich,

Thank you for your reply of Oct. 6. I look forward to seeing your new guidelines that will cover the indexing of supplements at NLM. Your letter indicated that you understand the problem with the existing guidelines. They only apply to supplements funded by for-profit organizations, but not supplements funded by non-profits that are largely funded by private firms or non-profit industry trade groups. This bodes well for your new approach. I would appreciate receiving an email notice when these new guidelines are released in December so we can analyze them in a timely fashion.

I am writing to you today to clarify some issues raised by our earlier exchange of letters.

It was brought to my attention last week that I made an error in my original letter to you (dated Oct. 2). I asserted that Dr. Alexander Logan is a paid consultant to the ILSI North American Technical Committee on Sodium, which sponsored the September supplement to the Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Dr. Logan claims he "is" not a paid consultant, and in an article that appeared last week in Science News, he claimed he has never been paid by firms or trade groups for his scientific work on salt.

Here's the fact as we know them (we are not privy to his financial disclosure statements, and as Dr. Cunningham, editor of the JACN confirmed to us, neither was JACN since none was ever solicited from Dr. Logan or any of the supplement's authors prior to publication).

1. Dr. Logan is currently an adviser to the ILSI North America Technical Committee on Sodium, which comprises leading salt consuming firms (see <http://www.ilsina.org/NR/rdonlyres/840B5B09-028F-4D5E-A91C-449172526533/0/Sodium.pdf>).
2. There is little doubt that he was once a paid adviser to the Salt Institute, a trade association that represents salt producers. According to a June 22, 1997 article in the London Observer written by Lancet editor Richard Horton, after a talk given by Dr. Graham MacGregor of St. George's Hospital on the dangers of excessive salt consumption, Dr. Logan participated in a press conference where he "denied that he was paid by the industry pressure group, the Salt Institute." Horton's account continued:

MacGregor quietly reached into his briefcase, pulled out some papers and handed them to his colleague. Logan scanned them quickly. When the reporter asked him

again if he was paid by industry, he flushed. 'Yes,' he replied. There was pandemonium. (Dr. Richard Horton, "Mind & Body: Health. Have the salt sellers got their hearts in the right place?" The Observer of London, June 22, 1997, p. 43.)

3. Dr. Logan's widely reported 1996 analysis suggesting current salt consumption patterns are safe for most people was funded by Campbell Soup. (Clive Cookson, "Salt in diet has little effect on blood pressure, says study," Financial Times of London, May 21, 1996, p. 1.) Both of these references are located in the Integrity in Science database at www.integrityinscience.org, and can be easily retrieved using Nexis.

As you consider changes in your policy for indexing supplements, I hope you will take into account the various situations that go into determining whether someone has a "conflict of interest." An effective policy would state that for a supplement to be indexed, it should: (a) contain conflict of interest disclosures for the private sector relationships of both editors and authors; (b) those private-sector disclosures should be required for both paid and unpaid relationships; and (c) the supplements that fall under the policy should include all sponsored supplements, whether the sponsor is for-profit or non-profit; in the latter case, if the non-profit or one of its committees or subsidiaries is largely industry funded, that, too, should be disclosed in the supplement before it can be indexed by the NLM.

Finally, I hope these new guidelines will be extended to all databases indexed at NLM, including TOXLINE.

Thank you for taking this issue seriously. In an era where "consumer-drive health care" and "evidence-based medicine" have become bywords, full disclosure of conflicts of interest of those who create the evidence in taxpayer-financed and publicly available databases is crucial.

Sincerely,

Merrill Gozner
Director, Integrity in Science
Center for Science in the Public Interest