



### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

Editorial Board of the *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences (JMIRS)*

This policy provides a framework within which the editor-in-chief, editorial board, and staff of the *JMIRS* can, with appropriate editorial judgment, address conflict-of-interest issues as they arise. A copy of this detailed internal policy is published on the journal's website at [www.jmirs.org](http://www.jmirs.org), and editors are required to sign a conflict of interest statement.

Integrity in the publication process requires impartiality at all levels of review. The *JMIRS* adheres to the policy of the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors](#) "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication."

As conflict of interest policies are always evolving, the *JMIRS* will continually review and revise the overall conflict of interest policies for the journal. The editors' conflict of interest policy, signed statements from the board, and written policies for submitting authors concerning conflict of interest represents an initial step toward keeping medical imaging research free of conflicts of interest to the fullest extent possible.

This policy is divided into the following sections:

1. Definition of conflict of interest
2. Declaration and disclosure
3. Managing specific conflicts

#### **1. Definition**

Conflict of interest is a set of conditions in which professional judgement concerning a primary interest (such as patients' welfare or the validity of research) tends to be unduly influenced by a secondary interest (such as financial gain). *Thompson DF. Understanding financial conflicts of interest. N Engl J Med 1993; 329: 573-576*

The potential for conflict of interest exists when an editor has financial relationships (such as employment, consultancy, stock ownership, honoraria and paid expert testimony) that may inappropriately influence his or her actions. Other forms of conflict of interest include personal, academic and intellectual issues. Conflict of interests (real and perceived) are often unavoidable and should not prevent an individual from serving as a board member unless the extent of the interest is so significant that the potential for divided loyalty is present in a large number of situations.

The following are examples of competing interests; they do not include all possibilities and they may coexist (*reprinted from [WAME](#)*):



**Financial ties:** This conflict is present when a participant in the publication process has received or expects to receive money (or other financial benefits such as patents or stocks), gifts, or services that may influence work related to a specific publication. Commercial sources of funding, by companies that sell drugs and medical devices, are generally seen as the most concerning, perhaps because of many well-publicized examples of bias related to ties to industry. Examples of financial ties to industry include payment for research, ownership of stock and stock options, as well as honoraria for advice or public speaking, consultation, service on advisory boards or medical education companies, and receipt of patents or patents pending. Also included are having a research or clinical position that is funded by companies that sell drugs or devices. Competing interests can be associated with other sources of research funding including government agencies, charities (not-for-profit organizations), and professional and civic organizations, which also have agendas that may be congruent or at odds with research findings. Clinicians have a financial competing interest if they are paid for clinical services related to their research—for example, if they write, review, or edit an article about the comparative advantage of a procedure that they themselves provide for income. Financial competing interests may exist not just on the basis of past activities but also on the expectation of future rewards, such as a pending grant or patent application. Furthermore, potential for conflict exists when financial interests are held by the individual or his or her spouse, committed partner, or dependent children.

**Academic commitments:** Participants in the publications process may have strong beliefs (“intellectual passion”) that commit them to a particular explanation, method, or idea. They may, as a result, be biased in conducting research that tests the commitment or in reviewing the work of others that is in favor or at odds with their beliefs. For example, if research challenging conventional wisdom is reviewed by someone who has made his or her reputation by establishing the existing paradigm, that person might judge the new research results harshly. Investigators in the same field might make extra-efforts to find fault with manuscripts from competing teams, to delay publication or relegate the work to a lesser journal. While such commitments are not generally part of author’s disclosures, editors should be aware of them and their potential influence on author(s), reviewer(s), and themselves.

**Personal relationships:** Personal relationships with family, friends, enemies, competitors, or colleagues can pose conflicts. For example, a reviewer may have difficulty providing an unbiased review of articles by investigators who have been working colleagues. Similarly, he or she may find it difficult to be unbiased when reviewing the work of competitors. Bonds to family members may be strong enough that their competing interests should be treated as if they are also present for those directly involved with a manuscript.

**Political or religious beliefs:** Strong commitment to a particular political view (*e.g.*, political position, agenda, or party) or having a strong religious conviction may pose a conflict of interest



for a given publication if those political or religious issues are affirmed or challenged in the publication.

**Institutional affiliations:** A conflict of interest exists when a participant in the publication process is directly affiliated with an institution that on the face of it may have a position or an interest in a publication. An obvious concern is being affiliated with or employed by a company that manufactures the drug or device (or a competing one) described in the publication. However, apparently neutral institutions such as universities, hospitals, and research institutes (alone or in partnership with industry) may also have an interest (or the appearance of one) in the results of research. For example, investigators may have a conflict of interest when conducting research from a laboratory funded by private donors who could have (or appear to have) an interest in the results of the study, on a device for which the participant's institution holds the patent, when the institution is the legal sponsor of the drug or device trial, or if the institution is in litigation in an area related to the study. Professional or civic organizations may also have competing interests because of their special interests or advocacy positions.

## 2. Declaration and Disclosure

By virtue of their positions, journal editors must be especially sensitive to the issue of actual or perceived conflicts of interest and must be especially rigorous in acting to avoid them.

No member of the editorial board of the *JMIRS* shall derive any personal gain, financial or materially, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation on the board. The payment of appropriate and documented expenses as allowed by the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists' (CAMRT) [expense allowance guidelines](#) consistent with travel, accommodation and miscellaneous expenses in the pursuance of the organization's goals do not apply.

Each member of the board, if they participate in editorial decisions, at the time of their acceptance of a position on the editorial board, and annually thereafter (at the start of each term) shall sign a conflict of interest statement to indicate they have no perceived or real conflicts of interest **OR** provide a full disclosure of any personal conflict of interest which he or she may have (as they might relate to editorial judgments). This signed form will be published on the journal website.

In the event that any conflict of interest arises during their tenure as a board member the conflict must be disclosed immediately in full, in writing (and added to the published statement on the website). Having declared the conflict of interest in writing the individual shall, on each and every occasion:

- withdraw from all participation in any discussions or voting related to the indicated contract(s);
- excuse themselves physically from any related discussions;



- refrain from influencing others regarding any associated decision making, or discussion.

Editors for the *JMIRS* are responsible for disclosing to the editor-in-chief any personal or financial relationship that may bias their work during the peer review process and recuse themselves when such conflicts are of sufficient. Because it is not possible to anticipate every situation, editors should inform the editor-in-chief at the time of manuscript invitation of any potential conflict of interest with a potential author or reviewer. Similarly, if an editor becomes aware of an apparent conflict of interest, he or she will inform the editor-in-chief. The editor-in-chief will consult with the associate editors who are not affected by the conflict, and the affected editor agrees to abide by their decision.

### 3. Managing Specific Conflicts

#### ***General policy***

If any of the editors or board members feels that there is likely to be a perception of a conflict of interest in relation to their handling of a submission, they will declare it to the editor-in-chief. Standard policy in such a case will be for one of the other editors to handle the submission, but the editor-in-chief may use their discretion.

#### ***Submission by an editor***

A paper submitted by an editor or board member (including submission as a co-author or serving as an advisor or advisee to the author) will be handled by one of the other associate editors who are not at the same institution as the submitting author. The chosen associate editor will select referees and make all decisions on the paper. The journal's review software, Editorial Manager, does not allow a conflicted editor access to relevant information concerning their manuscript. In addition, a conflicted editor will be barred from participating in any discussion among the editors pertaining to such manuscripts.

#### ***Conflicts involving the editor-in-chief***

A paper submitted by the editor-in-chief (including submission as a co-author or serving as an advisor or advisee to the author) is referred to the Deputy Editor, who will select an appropriate associate editor who in turn will select referees and make all decisions on the paper. Similarly, if the editor-in-chief has a conflict of interest with any submitted paper he will not act as an editor or reviewer and will not make the final decision on the paper.

#### ***Submission by author from same institution as one of the editors***

A paper submitted by an author who is at the same institution as one of the editors will be handled by one of the other editors who is not at that institution. This includes continuing employment (current or during the past 12 months) or negotiations for prospective employment at the institution of the author(s), which could affect or be affected by the peer review outcome. The other editor will select referees and make all decisions on the paper.



***Submission by family member of editor or by author whose relationship with editor might create the perception of bias***

A paper submitted by a family member of one of the editors, or by an author whose relationship with one of the editors might create the perception of bias (e.g. in terms of close friendship or conflict/rivalry), will be handled by another editor. Editors will also recuse themselves from being responsible for manuscripts submitted by associates (former students, fellows, mentors, and collaborators) with whom they have worked in the previous 5 years. The other editor will select referees and make all decisions on the paper. If in doubt, the editors will consult with one another.

***Potential conflict of interest for reviewers***

The peer reviewer policy is [posted online](#) on the journal website, and it contains the following statement: *The JMIRS attempts to prevent conflicts of interest by not inviting reviewers from the same institutions as authors. However, previous relationships or places of employment may not be apparent. In our invitation to potential reviewers, we ask that they decline to review if they know, or guess the identity of the author.*

The invitation letter to reviewers also includes the following paragraph: *'If you know or think you know the identity of the author, and if you feel there is any potential conflict of interest in your refereeing this paper because of your relationship with the author (e.g. in terms of close friendship or conflict/rivalry) or for any other reason, please declare it. By accepting this invitation, it is assumed there is no potential conflict of interest.'* Standard policy will be not to use a referee from the same institution as the author, especially if a conflict of interest has been declared, but the editors may use their discretion after consulting with one another. In general, it is best to avoid reviewers from the same institution as the authors, unless the institution is so large that authors and reviewers are not working colleagues.

***Sources of funding***

On submission, authors will be asked to provide a Footnotes statement that will appear after the Conclusion and before the References as follows:

**Acknowledgments:** Please keep this section to within 3-5 sentences.

**Contributors:** All authors contributed to the conception or design of the work, the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of the data. All authors were involved in drafting and commenting on the paper and have approved the final version.

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**Competing interests:** All authors have completed the ICMJE uniform disclosure form at [www.icmje.org/coi\\_disclosure.pdf](http://www.icmje.org/coi_disclosure.pdf) and declare: no financial relationships with any organizations that might have an interest in the submitted work in the previous three years; no other relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

**Ethical approval:** Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The REB (institution) approved the study. OR Ethical Requirement of Research Ethics Board approval for this project was formally waived by the institution.