

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PUBLICATION AND REPORTING OF RESEARCH

Giovanni A. Fava
University of Bologna

Disclosure of conflict of interest

Professor Fava has received grants from the Italian Ministry of Education, Italian National Institute of Health and Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche.

He is the Editor-in-Chief of Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics (Karger)

Conflict of interest occurs when an individual occupies two roles which should not be performed simultaneously

(Margolis, 1979)

WHICH ROLES?

Being a clinician/researcher and:

- an employee of a private firm
- a stockholder
- a member of a company board of directors
- a regular consultant
- owing a patent
- an occasional consultant
- an official speaker
- getting refunds

KRIMSKY'S STUDY

(Psychother Psychosom 1998; 67:194-198)

1 researcher out of 3 has a *substantial* conflict of interest (patent, being a stockholder or executive in a company, or serving in the board of directors)

GLASSMAN'S STUDY

(WJM 1999; 171:234-235)

A substantial part of the budget of scientific medical societies comes from the drug industry

WAZANA'S REVIEW

(JAMA 2000; 283:373-380)

Attending sponsored events and accepting funding for travel or lodging are associated with an increased prescription rate of the sponsor's medication

CHOUdry'S STUDY

(JAMA 2002; 287:612-617)

There are substantial links between authors of clinical practice guidelines and private firms

MELANDER'S STUDY

(BMJ 2003; 326:1171-1175)

Withholding research results, selective publication and selective reporting are common in trials sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry

PERLIS' STUDY

(Am J Psychiatry 2005; 162: 1957-1960)

Drug trials in psychiatry which reported conflict of interest were 5 times more likely to report positive results

KRIMSKY'S STUDY

(Psychother Psychosom 2001; 70:115-117)

Conflict of interest is reported in less than 1% of articles, despite the policies of the journals

MELLO'S STUDY

(NEJM 2005; 352: 2202-2210)

In most of the agreements the sponsor owns the data, may delay publication of data, may write up the paper, may not share data with other investigators when the trial is over

GHOSTWRITING

At least 10% of medical papers are actually ghostwritten. The percentage raises to 50% in case of sponsored drug trials

(Moffatt B, Elliott C, Perspect Biol Med 2007;50:18-31)

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Corporate interests which result in self-selecting academic oligarchies that influence clinical and scientific information

(Fava GA, Psychother Psychosom 2001; 70:1-5)

They act as the gatekeepers (editors, reviewers, consultants) of corporate interest in scientific information

WHAT TO DO?

JAMA'S REQUIREMENTS

(JAMA 2005; 294: 110-111)

- at least 1 author (non firm employee) has full access to the data and takes responsibility for the trial
- independent biostatistician
- registration of the trial

Fava G.A.: Financial conflicts of interest in psychiatry. *World Psychiatry* 2007; 6: 19-24

Criteria for the presence of substantial conflict of interest of a researcher

The researcher meets at least one of the following:

Being an employee of a private firm

Being a regular consultant or in the board of directors of a firm

Being a stockholder of a firm related to the field of research

Owing a patent directly related to the published work

Lines of support of independent researchers who are free of substantial conflict of interest

Priority for obtaining grants from public agencies supported by taxpayer money

Priority for scientific societies and medical journals editorship positions

Adequate visibility in scientific societies meetings programs

Inclusion only of researchers with no substantial conflict of interest in clinical practice guidelines groups

Conflict-free investigations and reviews should be emphasized in training and continuing medical education and should have priority in medical journals

Steps to addressing financial conflict of interest in medical research

Disclosure should become the rule in all scientific meetings and journals

Each scientific organization should have a Conflict of Interest Advisory Committee

Individual members of societies and readers of medical journals should express their dissent from presentations and articles biased by conflict of interest

Specific policies for integrity in science by professional societies, universities, granting agencies, pharmaceutical companies

Independent review bodies (within each field) for examining the issues concerned with conflict of interest

Educational plan for recognizing conflict of interest and the role of treatment ingredients

“If we do not like what we see when we look into the mirror honestly, we have every opportunity to do something about it”

(Chomsky N, Psychother Psychosom 2005;74:263)