

LETTERS

TACKLING CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

What the *New England Journal of Medicine* didJerome P Kassirer *distinguished professor*

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During the decade of the 1990s, when I was editor in chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, we rejected anyone who had a conflict of interest from writing an editorial or review article.¹ Sometimes it required going down the list until we found someone who didn't have a conflict, but we never had to compromise and accept someone without sufficient expertise to do a good job. I also think it's often a good idea to get someone who isn't too close to the action: it often avoids "group think" and provides a fresh perspective. But to maintain our 1990s policy takes more work because you can't just accept the

first person who pops into your mind. I was disappointed when the journal changed the policy, and said so publicly.

Competing interests: JPK was a former editor in chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

1 Godlee F. Turning the tide on conflicts of interest [Editor's choice]. *BMJ* 2011;343:d5147. (10 August.)

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