

BMJ policy on declaration of interests

BMJ is committed to ensuring the independence and integrity of our content, products, and services. We strive, therefore, to be transparent about any interests that our users, customers, and partners might want to know about. This policy on declaration of interests applies to everyone involved in the conception, creation, and delivery of our content, products, and services.

1. What interests should I declare?

We want to hear about interests that might conflict with the work you are doing or have been asked to do for BMJ. A conflict of interest arises when a person has a personal or organisational interest that may influence or appear to influence the work they are doing. Usually this is a financial interest, but it may also be non-financial.

Above all we want transparency about any personal or organisational interests that might be seen as a conflict of interest in relation to the task a person is being asked to do for BMJ.

The BMJ's policy announced in 2014 (<http://www.bmj.com/content/349/bmj.g7197>) prohibits authors with relevant financial ties to industry from writing editorials, clinical reviews, minerva pictures, endgames and practice articles (excluding therapeutics articles). By "industry" we mean companies producing drugs, devices, or tests; medical education companies; or other companies with an interest in the topic of the article.

The examples given in this document are not an exhaustive list. Individuals should ask themselves if there is anything that may strongly bias their judgement and potentially preclude them from performing the task requested of them, as well as anything that someone using BMJ products and services might want to know, or that might cause embarrassment or reputational damage if discovered after the event.

We ask people to be as clear and specific as possible about the activities, relationships, and views they are declaring. We may ask for more details about any declaration. We would want to know, for example, what honorariums were for. In declaring travel expenses, we would want to know the task that was carried out during that travel.

To make things manageable we would like to know about interests in the 36 months before the declaration and those known to be going to occur during the next 12 months.

2. How we categorise declaration of interests

We categorise declaration of interests into four main areas:

2.1 Personal financial interests

A personal financial interest is considered present when payments are made directly to an individual, whether as a salary or as fees or honorariums; or where an individual receives benefits from a third party who is not their main employer, such as a fellowship, equipment, writing or administrative assistance, or travel and accommodation expenses; or where an individual owns stocks and shares, patents, or other assets.

Examples include:

- Employment
- Paid consultancy or directorship
- Ownership of stocks and shares
- Patent ownership
- Paid membership of speakers panels/bureaus and advisory board
- Acting as an expert witness
- Being in receipt of a fellowship, equipment, writing, or administrative support
- Travel and accommodation expenses
- Writing or consulting for a medical education promotional or communications company.

We do not consider personal financial interests to be present in the case of assets over which individuals have no control, such as unit trusts, occupational pension funds, and accrued pension rights.

2.2 Organisational financial interests

An organisational financial interest is said to exist where the interest belongs at arm's length to the individual—for example, where payments are made to the individual's organisation rather than to their own bank account.

Examples include: Research grants
 Funds for staff or department

2.3 Non-financial interests

Non-financial interests can take many different forms, including personal or professional relations with organisations and individuals. Those that we want people to declare are unpaid positions that might have a bearing on the product or service being delivered by BMJ. We would also want to know about strongly held beliefs where they are relevant to the task in hand.

In addition, we encourage people to declare other personal interests that they consider may be a conflict of interest in the context of the task they are being asked to perform for BMJ.

Examples include: Unpaid officership of advocacy, charity, non-governmental organisation, or relevant professional group
 Unpaid membership of a guidelines panel
 Unpaid advisory positions in commercial organisations
 Personal relationships with authors or editors of material, including having held grants, co-authored articles or papers, or worked together.

2.4 Interests of related parties

Conflicts of interest may also arise where a related party (spouse, partner, or other close family member) has a financial or non-financial interest as described above that could be seen to conflict with the task a person is being asked to do for BMJ.

Examples include: A spouse holding stocks or shares or being on the board of an organisation that might be affected by the task the person is doing for BMJ.

3. When will you be asked to make declarations of interest?

We expect people to declare their interests before taking up any work for BMJ or entering into a contract with us for your services.

Where we are recruiting new staff, a declaration of interests will be part of the job application.

If we invite you to join an advisory board, or commission an article, lecture, or peer review report from you, we will ask you to declare your interests at the first approach in case there are conflicts of interest that preclude you from accepting the invitation.

Articles submitted for consideration must be accompanied by a completed declaration.

BMJ staff and members of advisory boards will be asked to review their declarations of interests annually (for staff this will be at the time of appraisal).

4. Dealing with declarations of interest

As per our policy relevant financial interests in category 2.1 and 2.2 above automatically preclude authorship for editorials, clinical reviews, minerva pictures, endgames and practice articles (excluding therapeutics articles).

Decisions about whether or not an interest disqualifies the person from taking on a particular task for *The BMJ* will be taken in the first instance by the section editor. If there is doubt by the editor or author

about the relevance of the interest it will be discussed at the editors monthly internal meeting. If the editors fail to reach a unanimous decision the matter will be referred to the Editor in Chief, whose decision is final.

There would be a right for anyone considered to have a conflict of interest sufficient to preclude them from working with BMJ on a particular task to appeal to the head of the relevant department.

If a full declaration was not made at the time and a conflict of interest comes to light after the event, BMJ reserves the right to retract any content affected by this conflict. BMJ may also seek to terminate contracts or employment affected in this way, and may choose not to work with the individual in the future.

5. Who should declare?

All of the following people are asked to declare their interests before working for or undertaking a task for BMJ

- Members of staff
- Members of BMJ board
- Editors in chief of BMJ journals and products
- Members of BMJ advisory boards
- Consultants, contractors, and freelancers producing material for BMJ products and services, authors, series editors, peer reviewers.

We also encourage our partners and the co-owning societies we work with to use our declaration of interest policy and forms.

6. What happens to declarations?

Whenever possible, we will publish declarations of interest statements alongside the material to which it relates: at product level on the relevant website for senior staff, board members, and advisers or otherwise at the level of the article, module, or event. These published statements may comprise the full declarations, or summary statements with full declarations available on request.

Speakers at BMJ Masterclasses or conferences will be asked to show a slide summarising their declaration at the beginning of their talk.

We will review staff, board member, and adviser declarations of interest annually. Signed declarations from BMJ staff will be kept by the Human Resources department in accordance with our information governance policy.

Where material is peer reviewed, requests for declarations will be sent to the peer reviewers, and editors will send any author declaration of interest statements to the peer reviewer.

BMJ has regular brand integrity meetings where it will review declarations of interest policies and audits of decisions.

Declarations of interest are kept on file in accordance with our information governance policies.

Last amended March 2016.