

MJ -
Decision on
Manuscript
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049989

Body: 14-May-2019

Dear Dr. Grundy

BMJ-2019-049989 entitled "Muddy waters: Variability in the reporting of conflicts of interest in the biomedical literature"

Thank you for sending us this paper and giving us the chance to consider your work. We sent it out for external peer review and discussed it at the Analysis manuscript committee meeting.

Unfortunately we do not consider it suitable for publication in its present form. However if you are able to amend it in the light of our and/or reviewers' comments, we would be happy to consider it again.

The reviewers' comments are at the end of this letter.

The editors' comments are listed below:

Analysis committee meeting:

Present: Sophie Cook, Cat Chatfield, Paul Simpson, Emma Rourke, Peter Doshi

Decision: Major revision

Comments from the editors:

*This is an interesting and important topic but we did wonder how novel this argument is. Could you make more of a case for why this needs to be aired/revisited now? How does this paper move the argument further along?

*We did find some repetition within the article and think that this could be addressed in a revision, particularly when it comes to describing the different ways to describe COIs.

*Should it really matter that much that the headings for COI sections vary in wording across journals? With XML, they can all be tagged the same even if they use different lingo to describe related concepts? Some further discussion on this would be helpful.

*We thought the recommendations needed further distilling. You recommend a global registry, and if that doesn't happen, Box 1 (pages 10-11) which needs a bit more unpicking. *Under "Identification" in Box 1, who are authors disclosing to e.g. who are authors supposed to disclose dollar values on all financial relationships? To editors only? Or in the manuscript? It's unclear at present and needs some further explanation.

*We think it would also be of interest to readers to see a mock model COI statement for a journal article so readers can better appreciate what you are suggesting becomes the new norm.

*One recommendation is for reporting how COIs were assessed and whether AND how they were managed, traffic light labels, etc. We imagine this taking up considerable space, especially on papers with many authors, how would this work in practice?

*You call for a public database of financial interests and suggest ORCID. There is already a related system - <http://www.convey.org/> - could you reflect on what it would take to get global buy-in to such a system?

*Pubmed is now capturing COI statements automatically from many journals, including The BMJ. It seems this might have happened in part as a result of some of your work - might you reflect on this development?

*Box 1 appears to be the biggest advance here, which is the beginnings of a guideline or policy. This is useful but we don't hear much about how you reached these recommendations or use a consensus process. Please could you discuss this further?

*Are there any similar guidelines (perhaps not ICMJE ones?) we were a little surprised that no one has tried to create a taxonomy similar to the CRediT taxonomy.

*We didn't wonder if the content of the article itself would have resolved the opening example which is out right non disclosure rather than lack of clarity - please could you comment on this?

We hope that you will be willing to revise your manuscript and submit it within 4-6 weeks. When submitting your revised manuscript please provide a point by point response to our comments and those of any reviewers. We also ask that you keep the revised manuscript within the word count of 1800-2000 words.

Please note that resubmitting your manuscript does not guarantee eventual acceptance, and that your revision may be sent again for review.

Once you have revised your manuscript, go to <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/bmj> and login to your Author Center. Click on "Manuscripts with Decisions," and then click on "Create a Resubmission" located next to the manuscript number. Then, follow the steps for resubmitting your manuscript.

You may also click the below link to start the resubmission process (or continue the process if you have already started your revision) for your manuscript. If you use the below link you will not be required to login to ScholarOne Manuscripts. before completing the submission.

If accepted, your article will be published online at bmj.com, the canonical form of the journal. Please note that only a proportion of accepted analysis articles will also be published in print.

I hope you will find the comments useful. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sophie Cook
Head of scholarly comment
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