

DEVELOPING THE 2016 IJPC-SE POSITION STATEMENT ON CONFLICT- OF-INTEREST AND DISCLOSURE: FIRST PROFESSIONAL RELEASE

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DEFINITION (FROM FIONA SIM'S PRESENTATION)

“Col exists when there is a divergence between an individual’s private interests [competing interests] and his/her responsibilities to scientific and publishing activities such that a reasonable observer might wonder if the individual’s behaviour or judgment was motivated by consideration of his/her competing interests”

Source: World Association of Medical Editors

COI CAN ARISE IN EVERY AVENUE OF OUR ENDEAVOR

- **Serving as a peer reviewer**
- **Publishing**
- **Receiving financial support**
- **Elected to office and having a vote**
- **Serving on boards and on review / editorial / advisory panels**
- **Interpreting the evidence before us**
- **Receiving donations (from vested interests?)**
- **And so on ...**

WATCH WORDS FOR US AS PROFESSIONALS

A MINEFIELD OF **REAL** VS. **PERCEIVED** COIs

AND OF

DISCLOSURE AND **RECUSAL**

IF WE ARE TO BE ETHICAL IN OUR CONDUCT AS PROFESSIONALS

DAMAGE CAUSED FROM FAILURES TO DISCLOSE OR RECUSE

- **Loss of credibility**
- **Loss of job**
- **Banned from publishing or receiving funds for a specified time**
- **Others ...**

THE IJPC-SE APPROACH: TRANSPARENCY THROUGH DISCLOSURE AND RECUSAL

IJPC-SE CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST (COI) DISCLOSURE STATEMENT INTERIM FORM 1 OF 3

Name in full: (First, middle initial, last): **JOHN DOE**

Current occupation, if employed; or, “retired”: **RESEARCHER**

If currently employed:

Name of primary employing entity: **HEALTH ADMINISTRATION**

Name of secondary employing entity, if applicable : -

Whether currently employed or not:

Primary professional affiliation taking up most of your volunteer time: **SOCIETY X**

Secondary such affiliation, if applicable: **N/A**

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, OR OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT IF NOW RETIRED:

Primary professional employment focus: **PUBLIC HEALTH**

Secondary professional employment focus, if applicable: **MEDICINE**

Tertiary professional employment focus, if applicable: **NONE**

I represent the following organization on the IJPC-SE (acronym, or “none”): **SOCIETY X** as the Primary (1), Secondary (2), Tertiary (3) or Quaternary (4), or not applicable [N/A] **PRIMARY** representative; or, as an invited guest/interested party/expert advisor:

IJPC-SE CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST (COI) DISCLOSURE STATEMENT INTERIM FORM 2 OF 3

Please include below, and elaborate where needed, all actual conflicting interests, including financial, consultant, institutional and other relationships that might lead or has led to bias or a conflict-of-interest, or that reasonably might create a perception of bias or a conflict-of-interest by your peers or the public. If there are none, please state “None” alongside each item “a” through “e” below. If in doubt, rather err on the side of providing more information as this will minimize the need for follow-up.

With the above definitions in mind relating to my employer and/or volunteer entities, those entities from which I have accepted grants / contracts, salaries / stipends / honoraria / royalties, both monetarily and in-kind, and anything else like personal relationships that could actually introduce, or be perceived to introduce bias into my decision-making, I disclose the following information covering the 5-year period since January 1, 2011:

IJPC-SE CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST (COI) DISCLOSURE STATEMENT INTERIM FORM 3 OF 3

- a) Financial relationships: **PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY**
- b) Consultant relationships: **NONE**
- c) Institutional relationships: **NONE**
- d) Other relationships: **NONE**
- e) Any additional information: **NONE**

If in my service to the IJPC-SE I should ever find myself in a conflict-of-interest, actual or perceived, I will declare it and offer to recuse myself from all circumstances that could in any way influence Board deliberations as per the Founding Bylaws (Article V, Section 2).

Please type your signature here: **JOHN DOE**

Enter Today's date (month/day/year) here: **01/24/2016**

A CURRENT IJPC-SE CONUNDRUM: A REAL OR A PERCEIVED COI?

A plaintiff law firm that:

- (1) works exclusively in asbestos tort litigation in support of individuals allegedly harmed by exposure to asbestos, and**
 - (2) likely made good use of the IJPC-SE 2012 *Position Statement on Asbestos* in its case against defense (corporate) attorneys**
- has pledged to donate \$20,000 to the IJPC-SE.**

Should the IJPC-SE accept the donation?

If “yes”, is there any risk of the IJPC-SE’s credibility being sullied in the future in claims of being beholden to plaintiff law firms?

PROPOSED PROTECTION BY POSTING ON WEBSITE AND ON ACKNOWLEDGMENT RECEIPTS

Whether a donation is made on behalf of an individual, a family, a firm, a business, a corporation, or a philanthropic foundation, the IJPC-SE accepts it on the understanding that the donation is made:

- in good faith in support of the IJPC-SE's Mission (linked to www.ijpc-se.org);
- consistent with the IJPC-SE's Gift Acceptance Policy (linked to https://www.ijpc-se.org/documents/IJPC-SE_Financial_Contribution_Policy-June_8_2015_revision_approved_June_26_revised_Sep_16_2015.pdf); and
- without the expectation of any *quid pro quo*.

No donation can be accepted from an individual, a business entity or other organization if the IJPC-SE is currently working, or is planning to work, on any topic whose final product could be of direct or indirect financial relevance to the business interests of such individual, business entity or organization.

TRANSPARENCY IN IJPC-SE DONOR POLICY (1 OF 2)

- **Vested interests, who do not wish independent, objective scientific evidence to be put forward when it threatens their interests, are likely to use any tactic possible to attack and slur the IJPC-SE**
- **The asbestos industry, in particular, has already and will likely continue to seek to attack and slur the IJPC-SE because the IJPC-SE 2012 Position Statement on Asbestos puts forward independent, objective scientific evidence that threatens their interests**
- **The IJPC-SE has therefore to be aware that such attacks unfortunately are likely, but should not to let this fact control the IJPC-SE's policies**
- **The test for whether COI or improper influence exists is whether, in the view of an objective, rational person, a real or perceived COI or improper influence exists. The test is not whether industries with a vested interest at stake allege that COI or improper influence exists. This would allow vested interests to control and/or impede any efforts to carry out independent, objective scientific work that serves the public interest but may threaten such vested interests**

TRANSPARENCY IN IJPC-SE DONOR POLICY (2 OF 2)

- **If, in the view of an objective, rational person, a real or perceived COI or improper influence exists with regard to a donation, the IJPC-SE should refuse the donation. Whether the donation comes from an individual, a business or any other entity, the same standard would apply**
- **If the IJPC-SE is currently working, or is planning to work on any topic whose final product could be of direct or indirect relevance to the financial interests of an individual, a business entity or other organisation, a donation from the individual, business entity or organisation should not be accepted. This decision is recommended in order to avoid any real or perceived influence in the final outcome of the work product of the IJPC-SE. If it is learned after a donation has been accepted that a real or perceived influence of this nature exists, the donation would be returned**
- **The fact that the IJPC-SE has adopted and published Position Statements on particular topics does not create a real or perceived COI or improper influence with regard to such topics because the work has been completed and finalized**

THE IJPC-SE BOARD'S CURRENT CONUNDRUM

Does a policy such as the one outlined above allow acceptance of an expected \$20,000 from a law firm that has pledged to make such a donation?

- **To accept or not to accept the pledged donation?**

NOTE THAT WITHOUT FUNDING, the work of the IJPC-SE would be severely curtailed; this at a time when the David's (the public interest professions) vs. the Goliath's (powerful moneyed interest) are so at odds with one another.

QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION?

Now, we enter the discussion stage. Panelists to the front

Let us review the learning objectives presented in the INTRODUCTION, as well as the GOALS of this session

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1. Gain knowledge of IJPC-SE accomplishments over the past 10 years and future directions**
- 2. Discuss CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST AND DISCLOSURE issues → current major focus**
- 3. Appreciate the need for philanthropy if the IJPC-SE is to be sustainable and independent in perpetuity**

CONCLUDING GOALS

- 1. Seek volunteers for the *Development Committee* with real-world experience and links to potential donors**
- 2. Reaffirm and commit to the ongoing role of the IJPC-SE as a consortium of epidemiology societies**