

# **Conflict of Interest Policy for ISEIS Publications**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the integrity, transparency, and academic honesty of the publication process in the **International Society for Environmental Information Sciences (ISEIS)** Publications. This policy applies to all participants in the publication process, including authors, peer reviewers, editors, and the editorial board members.

## **Definition of Conflict of Interest (COI)**

A COI occurs when an individual's personal interests or relationships could unduly influence their judgment or actions regarding the manuscript submission, peer review, editorial decision-making, or publication process. COIs can be financial, academic, personal, or otherwise.

## **Disclosure of COI**

### **Authors**

It is incumbent upon the author to disclose any personal interests or relationships that could potentially be influenced by the publication of the manuscript under consideration. The manuscript must explicitly acknowledge sources of funding. All contributing authors are required to declare any financial interests in entities that are commercially or corporately connected to the subject matter of the manuscript. The corresponding author, acting on behalf of all contributors, must inform the Editor of any real or perceived COIs when submitting the manuscript. Such conflicts will be noted in the published article. Furthermore, authors are obliged to submit amendments if COIs become apparent post-publication.

### **Reviewers**

A reviewer is assigned the duty to impartially assess the scientific value of a manuscript being considered. Their responsibilities include scrutinizing any COIs disclosed by authors and proactively disclosing to the Editor any circumstances or affiliations that might influence, or appear to influence, their evaluation of the manuscript. These circumstances encompass personal connections with the authors, engagement in competing research related to the manuscript's topic, or associations with any entity that has a vested interest in the subject being reviewed. In instances where a real or perceived COI is revealed, the decision to utilize or request a review lies with the Editor's judgement.

### **Editors and Editorial Board Members**

Editors and members of the Editorial Board involved in the ultimate adjudication of manuscripts are obliged to abstain from editorial determinations if they encounter COIs or relationships that could potentially pose conflicts regarding articles under review. Additional editorial personnel engaged in editorial decisions are required to furnish the editors with an up-to-date account of their financial interests or other conflicts (as these may pertain to editorial judgments) and must abstain from any decisions where a COI is present. It is incumbent upon editors to issue periodic disclosures concerning potential COIs associated with the obligations of the journal staff. Guest editors are expected to

adhere to these protocols as well. Submissions from Editors, Editorial Board members, or staff are processed in such a manner that precludes access to any specifics of the review process by the Editor or staff member involved, with the exception of the anonymized reviews and final decision.

## **Types of COI**

COI in the publication process can vary widely. While journals often emphasize managing financial conflicts due to their significant, yet not always apparent, influence, other types of conflicts can be equally impactful and less visible. Below are examples of COIs, noting that this list is not exhaustive and multiple conflicts may coexist.

**Financial Ties:** This conflict arises when individuals involved in the publication process stand to gain financially from the publication's outcomes. This includes receiving money, gifts, or services that might sway the work related to the publication. The most scrutinized sources are commercial, particularly companies in the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors, due to numerous instances of bias. Financial ties can stem from research payments, stock ownership, advisory roles, honoraria, patents, and positions funded by these companies. However, funding from government, charities, and professional organizations can also introduce biases, as these entities have their own agendas. Clinicians also face financial conflicts if they earn income from procedures they research or discuss. Expectations of future financial gain, such as pending grants or patents, and insider trading represent additional financial conflicts, carrying both ethical and legal ramifications.

**Academic Commitments:** Strong personal beliefs in specific theories, methods, or ideas can bias individuals' research or their review of others' work. For instance, researchers with established reputations in a particular field might unfavorably judge new research challenging the status quo. Such biases can also prompt researchers to excessively critique competing works, influencing publication timelines or relegating studies to lesser-known journals.

**Personal Relationships:** Connections with family, friends, rivals, or colleagues can introduce conflicts. Reviewers might struggle to remain impartial when evaluating work by close colleagues or competitors. Familial ties can influence manuscript involvement to the extent that they should be disclosed as competing interests.

**Political or Religious Beliefs:** Strong political or religious convictions can create conflicts if the publication confirms or challenges these beliefs.

**Institutional Affiliations:** Affiliations with institutions, including universities, hospitals, and research institutes, can pose conflicts. This is particularly relevant for individuals linked to entities that have a stake in the publication's outcomes, such as manufacturers of discussed drugs or devices. Even institutions perceived as neutral, like universities or research institutes partnered with industry, can have interests in research results. This extends to research funded by private donors, inventions patented by the institution, legal

sponsorships of trials, or litigation related to the study area. Professional and civic organizations may also have conflicts due to their advocacy positions or interests.