



Conflicts of Interest and Disclosure Policy

Awareness is committed to publishing the highest-quality research and reliable, authoritative articles that are free from commercial influence, conflicts of interest, or conflicts of commitment to the truthful, transparent, and unadulterated sharing of new information based on research or scholarly activity.

As a matter of principle, for all articles published in **Awareness**, the Editors and Publisher insist on publishing:

- ⇒ all sources of sponsorship, financial or material support for the research;
- ⇒ disclosure forms filed by all authors alongside the full text of each article; and
- ⇒ additional information about author contributions in the Methods section of research articles.

A separate disclosure policy applies to review articles, or editorials, or other article types that comment on published articles but do not present new research. **Awareness** expects that authors of such articles have no significant financial interests in any biomedical company relevant to topics and products discussed in the subject they are reviewing or the article on which they are commenting. When prospective authors do have financial ties to disclose, **Awareness** editors need to decide whether they are relevant to the subject and whether they are *de minimis*.

Awareness policy also requires that none of its editors have significant financial relationships with any biomedical companies.

Definition of reportable interests

For the purposes of this policy, "reportable interests" are defined to include any of the following financial relationships with entities that provide health care products or services and which exceed \$1,000 or ₹80,000 per year:

- ⇒ Stock holdings or equity
- ⇒ Compensation for consulting, speaking engagements, or other services
- ⇒ Royalties
- ⇒ All forms of research support (including support from commercial entities, foundations, and government agencies)
- ⇒ Any unrestricted grants that support a department or other administrative unit

All funds received and equity held within the past 3 years must be declared, as well as any commitments for the next 1 year. In addition, the following situations may be considered *potential* conflicts of interest:

- ⇒ Positions of influence in companies that provide health care products or services
- ⇒ Publication-level editorial obligation (i.e., primary decision-making roles) on research journals
- ⇒ Board memberships on publications that compete with **Awareness**
- ⇒ Leadership positions in professional societies
- ⇒ Any of the above relationships on the part of an editor's spouse, committed partner, or dependent child which might pose a conflict.

For these potential sources of conflict, all positions held within the last year, as well as any commitments for the next year must be disclosed.

Declaration of actual or potential conflicts

Editors-in-Chief and editorial board members

Editors and editorial board members must declare all their reportable interests annually and in writing via a standardized form to **Awareness**. Editors and editorial board members must further indicate which of these relationships exceed \$10,000/year or ₹8,00,000/year and should be prepared to provide details of such arrangements upon request.

- ⇒ Each Editor will, in addition, declare to **Awareness** any of the above relationships on the part of his/her spouse, committed partner, or dependent children that, in the judgment of the Editor, might be judged by reasonable independent parties to pose a conflict.
- ⇒ Each board member must declare to the Editor all reportable interests on the part of his/her spouse, committed partner, or dependent child that might be judged by reasonable independent parties to pose a conflict. The Editor will certify to the publisher of **Awareness** annually in writing that he/she has received this information from each board member.

Outside authors

Prior to writing, invited authors who are not members of the editorial board (e.g., feature authors, contributing editors, or reviewing editors) will be provided with a summary of the above requirements and asked to declare in writing any conflicts that might be seen to compromise their ability to write fairly and objectively. If a conflict exists and the individual has not recused him/herself, the Editor will decide whether the author should proceed and, if so, what to disclose in the published work about the conflict.

Disclosure of actual or potential conflicts

Internal disclosure

Disclosure forms will be held in confidence by the Publisher's office at the **Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence** (SSSUHE) and will be made available in full and in strictest confidence to the Editor, and, where relevant, Deputy or Associate Editors of each Editorial Board. Disclosure information for Editors will be made available in confidence to appropriate members of the SSSUHE Executive Committee, senior management of the **Awareness** journal and the Editorial Board.

Public disclosure

Publication of policy

This policy shall be published in its entirety on the <https://www.awarenessjournals.com/> website.

General disclosures on website

Editorial board members' general conflict-of-interest information will be readily accessible from each Editor's profile page. All of the relationships outlined above will be disclosed; however, no information about the amounts of any financial relationships will be disclosed, nor will disclosure on the website extend to information about spouses, committed partners, or dependent children.

Note of disclosure in print

A statement will appear in every print issue directing readers to the web for the full text of this policy and disclosure statements for all editorial board members.

Article-specific disclosures

On occasion, the Editor may choose to let an author (either a member of the editorial board or an outside author) write an article despite having a significant conflict. In such cases, disclosure of the specific conflict must accompany the article in print and online versions

Managing authors' and editors' conflicts

For standard summaries of original research articles, a board member or outside author may not write or make final editorial decisions about an article if he or she is an author of the original paper being covered. For all other situations, management of editors' and outside authors' potential conflicts within the day-to-day editorial operations of each editorial board member is based on the principle of recusal. Whenever a board member or potential outside author has a potential conflict (e.g., a financial conflict based on the relationships outlined above or any other personal or professional relationship such as being a member of the same department as an author of an original article being summarized or in any way standing to gain from the article), he/she must advise the Editor of the nature of the conflict(s) and offer to recuse him/herself from writing or making final editorial decisions about an article.

In addition, the following specific situations require an offer to recuse:

- ⇒ If a board member or outside author has written an editorial that accompanied an original paper in the journal of publication, he/she must offer to recuse him/herself from writing or making final editorial decisions about a corresponding summary.
- ⇒ If a board member or outside author has participated in the writing of guidelines, he/she must offer to recuse him/herself from writing or making final editorial decisions about a related summary.
- ⇒ If a board member or outside author has participated in the editorial review of and/or decision to publish an original article, he/she must offer to recuse him/herself from writing or making final editorial decisions about a corresponding summary.

The Editors will then evaluate the significance of the conflict and either accept the offer to recuse and reassign the article or direct the author to proceed. In the latter case, the Editor will also determine if article-specific disclosure of the conflict is required. Author disclosures at the time of publication of each article shall be made publicly available, with the online version of the article.

Reporting conflicts of interest in original research

Appropriate acknowledgment of conflicts of interest in the original source material is essential to the reader's full understanding and evaluation of the studies published in **Awareness**. The

following guidelines are applied in deciding whether and how to report conflicts revealed in the original source material.

Definition of reportable conflicts

Whenever significant industry support is reported in the original article, the fact of a potential conflict should be reported in a succinct manner. In particular, conflict must be acknowledged in the following circumstances:

- ⇒ Total or substantial support of the research has been provided by a concern with a vested interest in the results (e.g., the manufacturer of a study drug or device)
- ⇒ Author(s) are employed by the pharmaceutical or device manufacturer whose product is under study
- ⇒ Author(s) have some other potential conflict that is relevant to the findings (e.g., holding a patent, compensation for promoting a drug, equity interest in a company, paid as consultants or authors for the study by a company)
- ⇒ More limited degrees of support (e.g., donation of a drug, equipment, diagnostic tests, reagents, etc.) should also be acknowledged if the donated material is evaluated in the study and the outcome favors the manufacturer.

The decision whether to report other forms of potential conflict (e.g., public or foundation funding) is left to the editorial judgment of the author and the Editors.

Terminology for reporting conflicts

The precise wording for how a conflict is reported varies widely depending on the nature and scope of the particular conflict(s). As long as there is clear indication of the presence of a potential conflict, it is not necessary to provide details about the conflict or to list multiple conflicts (though the author may choose to do so). Examples of appropriate wording include:

- ⇒ "In this controlled, double-blind, manufacturer-sponsored study ..."
- ⇒ "In this study by researchers from the manufacturer ... "
- ⇒ "In this study by researchers including the holder of the patent on ... "
- ⇒ "Partially manufacturer-supported"
- ⇒ "Supported by the maker of [name of drug or device]" (especially suitable when reporting a comparison of therapies supported by the manufacturer of one)
- ⇒ "Government-sponsored", "publicly supported", or "supported by [name of government agency or academic/industry consortium]"

Care should be taken that the wording does not cast an unfairly pejorative light on the research.

Guidelines on placement of conflict-of-interest information

For summaries in the standard **Awareness** article format (i.e., background, methods results, discussion), conflicts that are judged to be significant and noteworthy should be reported factually in the background section of the review. If the author believes that the conflict casts doubt on the study's validity or conclusion(s), the conflict should also (or instead) be noted in the commentary. For feature articles and other article formats, the author and editors should consult on how and where the conflict should be reported in the text.

Monitoring compliance during the editorial process

Every submission to **Awareness** is reviewed by at least two members of the Editorial Board. Each manuscript is also reviewed by editorial staff who are familiar with this policy and the board members' published disclosure information. All reviewing editors will actively look for any

evidence of bias when reviewing or editing each manuscript.

Procedure for changing this policy

The publisher and editors of ***Awareness*** will initiate and administer changes to this policy. The editors and staff are responsible for communicating all substantive changes to the readership via notice published in print and online.