

Canadian Association
for the Study of the Liver



Association canadienne
pour l'étude du foie

CONFLICT OF INTEREST MANAGEMENT POLICY

The enclosed document describes how the Canadian Association for the Study of Liver Disease (CASL) will manage conflicts of interest (COI) for its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.

1) Why is this important to you and CASL?

CASL has a duty to act in the best interests of its members and its beneficiaries. Managing real and apparent conflicts of interest is important, both to protect the integrity of CASL programs and to protect the individual participants from inherent biases that are perceived or unperceived.

2) When did this come into effect and why?

Although accredited CPD activities have always required COI disclosures from those participating in content development and delivery, the requirements have recently changed. The *National Standard for Support of Accredited CPD Activities* was implemented January 1, 2018 and calls for the disclosure of all relationships from the past two years (whether with for-profit or non-profit organizations) that could potentially be seen to affect the educational content of the event.

3) What is a COI?

A "Conflict of Interest" arises when an individual is involved in a particular matter as part of his/her official duties with an outside organization with which he/she also has a financial interest, or one which is imputed to him/her, i.e., the employee's 1) spouse, 2) minor children, 3) general partner, 4) an organization in which the employee serves as officer, director, trustee, partner, or employee, or 5) a person or organization with which the employee is negotiating for prospective or has an arrangement for prospective employment.

In a real or actual conflict of interest, the private or personal interest is in place during the exercise of the official duties (whether or not these duties have been carried out improperly). The conflict may be current, or it may be found later to have existed at some point in the past. A potential or foreseeable conflict of interest involves a situation that may develop into an actual conflict of interest if the individual were to have particular official responsibilities in the future. The reference in the definition to "appear to influence" is also important. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can damage an organization's reputation – and damage to

its reputation could interfere with its ability to fulfill its mission. The test for an apparent or perceived conflict of interest is not whether the individual would act on the temptation, but whether a reasonable person would think that the individual's judgment is likely to be compromised.

4) How you can identify COI:

The first step in identifying potential or real conflicts of interest lies in requiring that any individual involved in the planning or delivery of a CPD event (Scientific Planning Committee members, faculty, authors, moderators, facilitators, and organizers) provide a current disclosure using CASL's Conflict of Interest Form.

It is CASL's policy to disqualify any faculty, authors, planners and Scientific Planning Committee (SPC) members who refuse to provide a conflict of interest disclosure from participation in the planning or delivery for CASL CPD activities.

The SPC for the CPD activity is responsible for the issuance, collection, and review of conflict of interest forms, and the subsequent management of any conflicts identified.

There are many ways to determine whether an interest poses a conflict of interest. It may help you to consider the following tips (Bero and Grundy 2016):

- A) Can you eliminate the interest? Consider whether it is theoretically possible to eliminate the interest, which might indicate that it is a conflict of interest.
- B) Can the interest consistently produce bias? Consider whether the interest would produce a consistent direction of bias in the context of educational content development or delivery, such as if financial sponsorship were to influence decisions consistently in favor of an intervention or product preferred by the sponsor.
- C) Does the scope of influence extend beyond an individual? Consider whether the scope of influence extends beyond an individual. For example, financial ties with companies whose products may be affected by or recommended in a session are conflicts of interest because multiple session presenters could have such ties (and they would consistently favor interventions being recommended over others for whom there is also a basis in scientific evidence).

5) What you can do to deal with COI:

You should adopt measures to mitigate conflicts of interest before they become a real issue. There are a number of simple steps that you can take when real or potential conflicts appear.

- A) The speaker could be required to alter the focus of the talk to limit the areas where there may be a conflict of interest.
- B) The topic selected could be changed, but the same speaker be used.

- C) The planning committee can ask for a peer review of the content to ensure that the principles of scientific integrity, objectivity and balance have been respected.
- D) Both topic and speaker could be removed from the program. This is a very uncommon occurrence, but it can be a last resort if a significant conflict of interest cannot be otherwise managed.
- E) If a scientific planning committee member, the conflict would be declared to others on the committee and the member could recuse themselves from planning decisions relevant to their area of conflict.

6) How you can disclose COI:

A completed Conflict of Interest Form should be collected from each SPC member, faculty, facilitator, moderator, author or planner involved in the development or delivery of the CPD activity in accordance with the instructions provided on the CASL form.

All COIs disclosed, whether mitigated or not, should be disclosed to participants verbally, via a disclosure slide, and/or in writing within program materials.

References:

[Bero, L. A. and Q. Grundy \(2016\). Why Having a \(Nonfinancial\) Interest Is Not a Conflict of Interest. PLoS Biology 14\(12\): e2001221.](#)