

POLICY SUMMARY: CONFLICT OF INTEREST MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

As the leading medical society for physicians involved in cancer treatment and research, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) has an important role in helping physicians deliver quality oncology care. One of the primary ways in which ASCO fulfills this responsibility is through the development of clinical practice guidelines, technology assessments, and clinical evidence reviews. Public confidence in these guidelines depends on the cultivation of expert opinions based on the best available evidence and in a manner designed to minimize actual and perceived conflicts of interest.

For ASCO, guideline development is a multi-step process. Once drafted by a diverse panel of experts, guidelines must be approved by the Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee, adopted by the Board of Directors, and peer-reviewed in accordance with rigorous standards set by the *Journal of Clinical Oncology (JCO)*. The procedures summarized here provide strategies for managing potential conflicts of interest through each phase of guideline development.

Expert Panels

All prospective panel members must disclose financial interests and other relationships with entities that have an investment, licensing, or other commercial interest in the subject matter under consideration in the guideline under review. A majority of panel members may not have financial relationships with any commercial entity that is reasonably likely to experience direct regulatory or commercial impact as a result of care delivered in accordance with guideline recommendations (“affected companies”). Panel members are expected to remain free of these relationships from the start of panel deliberations through publication of the guideline.

Generally, panel chairs and co-chairs may not have financial interests in or relationships with affected companies or products. The Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee may name a panel chair who receives only research funding from an affected company if doing so would ultimately help the panel develop a better quality guideline. If one panel chair is permitted to accept research funding the Committee must appoint a co-chair who has no relationships with affected companies, including research funding.

These restrictions apply to the activities and interests of panel chairs and co-chairs for a period of one year prior to the commencement of panel deliberations through one year after the guideline is published.

Panel recommendations must be adopted by a 75% majority of panel members in attendance at a meeting where a simple majority of panel members are present.

When ASCO guidelines are published in ASCO journals, the disclosure information provided by panel members is generally published concurrently.

Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee and Board of Directors

Members of the Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee and the Board of Directors must disclose financial interest and other relationships with entities that have an investment, licensing, or other commercial interest in the science or practice of oncology. Only Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee and Board members who do not have financial relationships with affected companies or products may vote to approve or adopt a guideline.

JCO Peer Review

JCO Editors and reviewers disclose financial interests and other relationships in a manner that is consistent with the ASCO Conflict of Interest Policy and the practices and procedures set by the Journal.

JCO Editors and reviewers may decline to review a guideline due to potential conflicts of interest.

Last reviewed: June 25, 2008