



## European Board for Accreditation in Pneumology



SMART GUIDE  
ON COI

## Introduction

It is the policy of EBAP to ensure objectivity, balance, independence and a high scientific standard of educational events and publications that receive accreditation.

This smart guide aims to support CME activities organisers or publishers manage potential conflict of interests related to their CME activities.

## Conflict of Interest: proposed definition

All partners involved in the field of CME recognize the importance of declaring Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Interest Management.

We first need to define a *Conflict of Interest*.

**A conflict of interest is a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest.<sup>1</sup>**

A potential conflict of interest might arise from various relationships, past or present, such as employment, consultancy, investments and stock ownership, funding for research, family relationship, etc.

Gender, background and ethnicity, personal or religious beliefs also play a role in one's decision-making process. In certain circumstances, this could also be considered as a potential conflict of interest.

## Transparency

The existence of potential conflicts of interest does not necessarily indicate a bias and therefore may not automatically lead to the withdrawal of a talk or an article. However it is the event organiser or publisher's ethical obligation to inform learners so that they are made aware of any relationship that **might** cause unintentional bias.

Above all we seek **transparency** as it is not our role to pose a judgment of value. Participants to an event or readers should be provided with all the necessary information to make their own judgment on the content of a CME activity.

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1 Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education, and Practice, Bernard Lo and Marilyn J. Field, Editors; Committee on Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education, and Practice; Institute of Medicine.

We believe it is in everyone's interest, including the physicians', that potential conflicts of interest are properly declared, so that the credibility of the presenter or writer and CME activity organiser or publisher cannot be exposed by third parties.

Ultimately, we recognise that organisers or publishers can only rely in the physician's honesty and individual judgment.

## Conflicts: who should declare what?

As a general rule and for all activities, we recommend that:

- › **Any direct or indirect COI that may influence the activity must be declared.**
  - › **Direct:** in relation to the individual (faculty or committee member, speaker or writer). This includes but is not limited to support, grant or funding paid directly to the individual, gifts, shares owned personally, personal relationship, etc.
  - › **Indirect:** in relation to the individual's institution, department or project. This includes but is not limited to support, grants or funding paid to the institution, department or project.
- › **Declaration should include potential COI going back 3 years prior to the presentation, article submission, etc.**

### 1) Live Events

- a. **Programme/Organising Committee:** It is a requirement that members of the Programme or Organising Committee declare any potential conflict of interest that may influence the **organised activity**.
- b. **Speakers:** It is a requirement that all speakers declare any potential conflict of interest that may influence their participation in the event and in particular **their talks**.

### 2) Printed material (articles, books)

- a. **Editors:** Editors are required to complete a Conflict of Interest form pertinent to their **function and mandate within the publishing company**. In addition, should any potential conflict of interest or bias arise in relation to an article or book chapter requiring their involvement, this should be immediately reported.

- b. **Reviewers:** Reviewers should declare any potential conflict of interest in relation to their **assessment duties**. The Editor/Publisher should be made aware immediately if there is any potential bias or potential conflict with a publication they are requested to review.
- c. **Writers:** Writers must declare any potential conflict of interest that may influence **the publication** and these should be made available to the readers.

### 3) E-learning Activities

- a. **Programme or content designer/committee:** Members of the committee or content designer responsible for designing the e-learning activity are required to declare any potential conflict of interest related to the **organised activity**.
- b. **Presenter (if any):** All presenters must declare any potential conflict of interest **related to their participation in the e-learning activity**. Potential conflict of interests should be made available to the learner.

### 4) Other CME/CPD activities

- a. **Programme/organising Committee:** It is a requirement that members of the Committee responsible for designing the CME/CPD activity declare any potential conflict of interest related to the **organised activity**.
- b. **Other individuals involved:** Other individual involved will be required to complete the COI form as **occasion demands, depending on the type of CME/CPD activity**.

## COI Management

Should there be a real / proved bias, it is the responsibility of the CME activity organiser or publisher to resolve it.

Means to resolve bias will depend on the nature of the conflict and its potential impact on the event or activity in question.

We recommend caution with bias related to programme / organising committee members, editors, etc. These individuals are responsible to guarantee the activity's independence, quality, content accuracy and fair

balance. It is in the organiser's interest that their reputation remains intact.

Particular attention should be paid to bias in relation to shareholding in pharmaceutical / equipment companies.

We also recommend for CME activity organisers to be very strict with conflict of interests related to tobacco industry and tobacco corporate affiliates.

Through CME accreditation, EBAP strives to improve the education in respiratory medicine, thus improving patient's health. As such, EBAP will reject any activity where sponsorship or potential bias linked to the tobacco industry is suspected.

Below are a few examples on how conflict of interests could be resolved:

1. A speaker could be prevented from giving a talk on a specific subject where his/her independence is questionable. Alternatively, the topic or focus of the presentation could be amended to avoid potential bias.
2. A committee member involved in the review and approval of the activity could be asked to withdraw from planning that activity, either fully or partially. The committee member could be assigned other duties where there would be no risk the declared conflict would influence his/her decisions. Alternatively, the committee member could decide to cut ties with the commercial company, thus eliminating the conflict of interest.
3. The content of a document could be limited to a report instead of a recommendation, or sources for recommendations could be limited or monitored by a third party. The involvement of a researcher with a conflict could be focused on the data and results only whereas the recommendations would be addressed by another colleague.

Ideally, organisers should receive slides from presenters in advance of the event to allow for members of the programme/ organising committee to screen the presentations in case of doubts. We however recognise this may not always be feasible and leave it to the organiser's discretion.

The same philosophy should be applied to all CME products and we recommend that particular care is taken with regards to potential bias in enduring material (printed or otherwise).

## Templates for declarations

It is impossible to establish a complete list of potential conflict of interests as these are very much dependent upon the nature of the primary and secondary interests.

EBAP however has identified the most common ones and proposes the use of a standard COI form.



### DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Information pertinent to the CME activity	
Type of activity	<input type="checkbox"/> live event <input type="checkbox"/> Printed material: <input type="checkbox"/> article <input type="checkbox"/> book chapter <input type="checkbox"/> book <input type="checkbox"/> other: <input type="checkbox"/> E-learning <input type="checkbox"/> Other CME/CPD activity:
Activity title:	
Activity dates (if applicable):	
Information regarding yourself and your responsibility(ies) for the above CME activity	
Title	
First name	
Last name	
Affiliation:	<input type="checkbox"/> member of Scientific / organising committee <input type="checkbox"/> chair <input type="checkbox"/> speaker <input type="checkbox"/> printed material editor <input type="checkbox"/> chair <input type="checkbox"/> reviewer <input type="checkbox"/> other:
What is your responsibility for this activity?	

I hereby declare that:

- I have no direct or indirect potential conflicts of interest to report for the past 3 years  
 I have the following potential direct or indirect conflicts of interest to report for the past 3 years:

Note. In case of potential conflict of interest linked to financial support, please use the following table to record the amount of fund received:

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Less than €1,000	€1,000-€5,000	€5,000-€20,000	Above €20,000

Type of affiliation / financial interest	Name of commercial company	Nature of the potential conflict and amount received (if relevant)
Do you have any tobacco-industry / tobacco corporate affiliate related conflict of interest? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Receipt of grants/research supports (for yourself):		
Receipt of grants/research supports (for your department):		
Receipt of honoraria or consultation fees:		
Participation in a company sponsored speaker's bureau:		
Stock shareholder:		
Spouse/partner conflict of interest (as above):		
Other support (specify):		
Other potential conflict (specify):		

Date:

Signature:

Any potential bias relevant to the topic of the talk should be disclosed at the very beginning of the presentation. EBAP also proposes a standard slide to be used by presenters.

## Conflict of interest disclosure

I have **no**, real or perceived, direct or indirect conflicts of interest that relate to this presentation.

I have the following, real or perceived direct or indirect conflicts of interest that relate to this presentation:

Affiliation / financial interest	Nature of conflict / commercial company name
Tobacco-industry and tobacco corporate affiliate related conflict of interest	
Grants/research support (to myself, my institution or department):	
Honoraria or consultation fees:	
Participation in a company sponsored bureau:	
Stock shareholder:	
Spouse/partner – conflict of interest (as above):	
Other support or other potential conflict of interest:	

This event is accredited for CME credits by EBAP and speakers are required to disclose their potential conflict of interest going back 3 years prior to this presentation. The intent of this disclosure is not to prevent a speaker with a conflict of interest (any significant financial relationship a speaker has with manufacturers or providers of any commercial products or services relevant to the talk) from making a presentation, but rather to provide listeners with information on which they can make their own judgment. It remains for audience members to determine whether the speaker's interests or relationships may influence the presentation. Drug or device advertisement is strictly forbidden.

It is also a requirement for the conflict of interests to be made available to the audience, either in electronic or paper format, allowing learners to consult/access the COI forms for more details.

Similarly, writers should be requested to complete a COI form and any potential conflict of interest should be made available to the readers.

The above-mentioned template COI form and COI slide can be downloaded from EBAP website. Providers are welcome to adapt or add to the proposed form and slide, provided that they keep all components relating to COI.

It is the responsibility of the activity organiser or publisher to collect and archive related COI forms. EBAP can ask event organisers or publishers to provide copies of COI forms up to one year after the end of the CME activity.

## EBAP Headquarters

For more information or assistance, do not hesitate to contact our office.



Visit us [ebap.org](https://ebap.org)

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