Basic Formula for Standard Declaration of Conflicts of Interest at Scientific Congresses

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Background

Disclosing conflicts of interest (COI) is an important step in the management of conflicts of interest and is considered to be crucial for trustworthiness of presenters. There are significant variation in disclosure procedures regarding how COI is assessed in declaration forms (e.g. type of question, respondent awareness) type of relationships detailing of information to program committee members, which in effect have led to under reporting of COI and reducing the informational value of declared COI to participants.

Thus, it has been the aim of the authors to propose a basic formula for a minimum standard declaration of **financial** COI, with a potential to be applicable to all types of accredited CME as well as to all individuals (e.g. speakers, authors) involved in planning and conduct of CME activities. In particular, this approach should serve high-volume face-to- face meetings to improve the transparency related to COI for the audience.

Please declare for the last 5 years and the next 12 months*:

A. I have received (a) research grant(s)/ in kind support (to you, your institution or employer)		B. I have been a speaker or participant** in accredited CME/CPD:		C. I have been a consultant/strategic advisor/member of a speakers bureau etc. :		D. I am a holder of (a) patent/ shares/stocks*** or ownership (himself /spouse/partner/child(ren))****	
a) from any institution (not only pharmaceutical or medical device industry, but also government, foundations etc.) other than the sponsor(s)	yes ( ) / no ( )	a) sponsored by any institution (not only pharmaceutical or medical device industry, but also government, foundations(s) etc.)	yes ( ) / no ( )	a) any institution	yes ( ) / no ( )	a) of a company active or relevant in medicine, but not active in the field related to the presentation	yes ( ) / no ( )
b) from sponsor(s) of current event	yes ( ) / no ( )	b) sponsored by sponsor(s) of current event	yes ( ) / no ( )	b) sponsor(s) of current event	yes ( ) / no ( )	b) of a company active in the field related to the presentation	yes ( ) / no ( )

*: in case that arrangements have already been made at the time of declaration

**: applies only if costs for travel/accommodation/registration have been covered by the sponsor

***: shares in stock fund excluded

****: includes part-time employment or that a member of the household is an employee of such company

Fig. 1

Recommendations for use:

- Show score only
- Show filled form (fig. 2)
- Score "0-1": inform participants that "no financial interests to be declared"
- Score "2": provide detailed information to participants on type and nature of the financial interest
- Score "3": add information on level of financial support (per source of money) to what has been declared for Score "2"
- Score "4": in addition to what has been declared for Score "3", inform participants (by provider or presenter) which strategies have been applied to minimise bias.

Process:

A questionnaire was developed as a follow-up of the Cologne Consensus Conference 2014 that recommended:

- use of structured closed questions,
- disclose **all** sources of payment by category of funding source (i.e. 1. research, 2. honoraria for CME, 3. payment for activities like speakers' bureau etc., 4. patent holder, shareholder etc.) (see figure 1)

From this information, a point-based (0- >12 points) score can be calculated (see figure 2). The higher the number of points the more detail will be provided to participants as a basic declaration of COI.

Please declare for the last 5 years and the next 12 months*:

A. I have received (a) research grant(s)/ in kind support (to you, your institution or employer)	points	B. I have been a speaker or participant** in accredited CME/CPD:	points	C. I have been a consultant/strategic advisor/member of a speakers bureau etc. :	points	D. I am a holder of (a) patent/ shares/stocks*** or ownership (himself /spouse/partner/child(ren))****	points
a) from any institution (not only pharmaceutical or medical device industry, but also government, foundations etc.) other than the sponsor(s)	~~yes~~ (1) / no (0)	a) sponsored by any institution (not only pharmaceutical or medical device industry, but also government, foundations(s) etc.)	~~yes~~ (2) / no (0)	a) any institution	yes (5) / ~~no~~ (0)	a) of a company active or relevant in medicine, but not active in the field related to the presentation	yes (10) / ~~no~~ (0)
b) from sponsor(s) of current event	~~yes~~ (2) / no (0)	b) sponsored by sponsor(s) of current event	~~yes~~ (4) / no (0)	b) sponsor(s) of current event	yes (8) / ~~no~~ (0)	b) of a company active in the field related to the presentation	yes (16) / ~~no~~ (0)
Subtotal	2		4		0		0

To calculate the score, please add up the highest number of points per each category, i.e. a) or b), then take the score from the table "rating scale".

Total	6
Score	2

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Please note: Employees of commercial interests in medicine are usually not accepted as presenters in accredited CME/CPD. If they nevertheless should be accepted, they should be assigned 16 points ("very high" on the rating scale).

Rating scale	Score
0: none=	0
1-2: low=	1
3-7: medium=	2
8-12: high=	3
>12: very high=	4

Fig. 2

Conclusion:

We consider this approach to be

- concise and easy to grasp
- appropriate to the content presented, and
- robust over a range of national privacy protection laws.

The score may be most useful for high-volume face-to- face meetings to improve the transparency related to COI for the audience, but may also be used as an indicator for when more elaborate declarations of COI will be required not only by congress organisers but also by CPD accreditors etc. including non-financial conflicts of interest.

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