**BJD policy on declaration of interests**

The *BJD* is committed to ensuring the independence and integrity of the journal’s content. We strive, therefore, to be transparent about any interests that our editorial team members, editorial board members, reviewers and authors might have. This policy document on declaration of interests applies to everyone involved in the conception, creation, and delivery of all *BJD* content.

1. **What interests should I declare?**

   We want to hear about interests that might conflict with the work you are doing or have been asked to do for *BJD*. A conflict of interest arises when a person has a personal or organisational interest that may influence or appear to influence the work they are doing. This may be a financial or non-financial interest. Above all we want transparency about any personal or organisational interests that might be seen as a potential conflict in relation to the role or task that a person is being asked to do for *BJD*. Conflicts of interest are often unavoidable, and should be managed as far as possible rather than prohibited. However, some interests may be so conflicting that the individuals involved should not do the task the *BJD* needs doing.

   The examples given in this document are not an exhaustive list. Individuals should ask themselves if there is anything that may strongly bias their judgement and potentially preclude them from performing the task requested of them. Additionally, they should consider the perception of others if an undeclared interest came to light; might this cause embarrassment or reputational damage to the *BJD* if discovered after the event? We ask people to be as clear and specific as possible about the activities, relationships, and views they are declaring. Furthermore, we may ask for more details about any declaration. We would want to know, for example, the amount and reason for honoraria, particularly in the context of pharmaceutical advisory board work. In declaring travel expenses, we would want to know the task that was carried out during that travel, and the amount of the travel expenses.

   To make things manageable, you need only declare interests in the 36 months before the declaration and those known to be going to occur during the next 12 months. For *BJD* reviewers and authors, a conflict of interest response is an integral component of every interaction with the journal through ScholarOne. A declaration of conflict of interest does not automatically preclude the individual from contributing to the *BJD*; nevertheless, individuals are expected to declare a conflict of interest where appropriate.

2. **How interests are categorised at the *BJD***

   These are divided into four main areas:

   2.1 **Personal financial interests, including paid advocacy**

   A personal financial interest is considered present when payments are made directly to an individual, whether as a salary or as fees or honoraria; or where an individual receives benefits from a third party who is not their main employer, such as a fellowship, equipment,
writing or administrative assistance, or travel and accommodation expenses; or where an individual owns stocks and shares, patents, or other assets.

Examples of personal financial interests include: Employment; paid consultancy or directorship; ownership of stocks and shares; patent ownership or applications; paid membership of speakers panels/bureaus and advisory board; gives paid testimony on behalf of the organisation; acting as an expert witness; being in receipt of a fellowship, equipment, writing, or administrative support; travel and accommodation expenses; writing or consulting for a medical education promotional or communications company. We do not consider personal financial interests to be present in the case of assets over which individuals have no control, such as unit trusts, occupational pension funds, and accrued pension rights.

2.2 Organisational (non-personal) financial interests
An organisational financial interest is said to exist where the interest belongs at arm’s length to the individual; for example, where payments are made to the individual’s organisation rather than to their own bank account. Examples of organisational financial interests include: research grants; unrestricted educational grants; funds for staff or department.

2.3 Personal non-financial interests, including unpaid advocacy
Non-financial interests can take many different forms, including personal or professional relations with organisations and individuals. Those that we want people to declare are unpaid positions that might have a bearing on the role they are fulfilling at the BJD or on the BJD itself. We would also want to know about strongly held beliefs where they are relevant to the task in hand. In addition, we encourage people to declare other personal interests that they consider may be a conflict of interest in the context of the task they are being asked to perform for BJD.

Examples of non-financial interests include: unpaid officership of advocacy, charity, non-governmental organisation, or relevant professional group; unpaid membership of a guidelines panel; unpaid advisory positions in commercial organisations; personal relationships with authors or editors of material, including having held grants, co-authored articles or papers, or worked together.

2.4 Interests of related parties
Conflicts of interest may also arise where a related party (spouse, partner, or other close family member) has a financial or non-financial interest as described above that could be seen to conflict with the task a person is being asked to do for BJD. Examples include: a spouse holding stocks or shares or being on the board of an organisation that might be affected by the task the person is doing for BJD.

3. When will you be asked to make declarations of interest?
We expect people to declare their interests before taking up any work for BJD or entering into a contract with us for your services. Where we are recruiting new staff to the BJD, a declaration of interests is part of the job application process. Those invited to author an article for the BJD will ask to declare their interests at the first approach in case there are
conflicts of interest that preclude the invitee from accepting the invitation. Articles submitted for consideration must be accompanied by a completed COI declaration. BJD editorial team members and Editorial Board Members will be asked to review their declarations of interests annually.

4. Dealing with declarations of interest
In most cases disclosure will be sufficient, but in some cases an interest may be too conflicting. These are most likely to be current financial relationships or contractual arrangements that appear to prevent an individual from providing an unbiased expert judgement, such as where a person has signed a contract in which he or she agrees to be paid for advocating the opinion of that organisation or company. Any such conflicts would be discussed with the individual who has disclosed them by the person who has asked them to do the work for BJD. Decisions about whether an interest disqualifies the person from taking on a particular task for BJD will be taken by the relevant senior staff member. If a full declaration was not made at the time and a conflict of interest comes to light after the event, the BJD reserves the right to retract any content affected by this conflict.

5. Who should declare?
All of the following people are asked to declare their interests before working for or undertaking a task for BJD
- BJD members of staff
- Members of BJD Editorial Board
- The BJD Editor, and the BJD Editorial team (Deputy Editor, Section Editors and Associate Editors)
- Consultants and freelancers producing material or editing for the BJD as authors, guest editors or peer reviewers.

6. What happens to declarations?
Whenever possible, we will publish declarations of interest statements alongside the material to which it relates. These published statements may comprise the full declarations, or summary statements with full declarations available on request. We will review Editorial team and Editorial Board member COI declarations annually. Declarations of interest by the BJD team are kept on record are available for inspection, upon request. Where material is peer reviewed, requests for declarations are sent to the peer reviewers. Additionally, author declaration of interest statements are made available to peer reviewers as an integral element of the ScholarOne peer review process. BJD considers publication ethics and brand integrity as a standing agenda item at the annual editorial team meeting. Furthermore, this is also included in all BJD Editorial team meetings at the large international dermatology meetings.

6.1 What should be done with the information?
The person responsible for getting/receiving/using the information provided in the declaration should ask themselves: does anything in this declaration compromise the person’s ability to do the task that needs doing for the BJD—or could it be perceived as being compromising? If the answer is yes or possibly, the responsible person should discuss it with a senior member of the BJD Editorial Team. Importantly, there should be some
discussion about this before a decision is made and there should be some documentation of the decision, the decision-making process, and the reasons for the decision.

What constitutes “a conflict of interest too far” will differ according to the task the person is being asked to do. Broadly speaking, this would be anything that interferes with the unbiased output and integrity of the BJD. This is likely to occur if the person declares a current financial relationship or contractual arrangement that appears to prevent him or her from providing an unbiased expert judgement. For example, where a person has signed a contract in which he or she agrees to be paid for advocating the opinion of that organisation or company, or where he or she is in receipt of significant personal financial benefits.

6.2 Where will the declaration be published?
- All monthly BJD content: on the BJD website, alongside each article
- Editorial team (Editor, Deputy-Editor, Section Editors, Associate Editors): BJD website (updated annually).
- Editorial Board Members: BJD website (updated annually)

7. What happens if a person fails to make a full declaration of interests?
If we are alerted to the fact that someone may have an undeclared and potentially conflicting interest, this always requires careful handling. The first step is to raise the concern with the person involved and to ask if the conflict exists and their reasons for not declaring it. Based on their response various actions may follow. Their declaration of interests may simply need to be updated or a clarification notice or response published. Where a conflict is substantial and risks compromising the integrity of BJD content, the person may be removed from undertaking the task. Furthermore, the article or other content they have been working on may need to be retracted. Such cases must be discussed with a senior editorial team member and records kept of all decision making. When documenting the decision-making process, care should be taken to only record the facts of the case under review and to avoid any speculation or making any personal comments about a person’s declaration of interests.

8. Implications for conflict of interest regarding policies and procedures for the BJD
8.1 Senior editorial team posts

The following senior positions on the BJD Editorial team must have few, if any financial conflicts of interest:
- Editor
- Deputy-editor
- Section editors
- Chair of BJD Editorial Board Advisory Committee

8.2 BJD Content

Editorials: Authors of BJD editorials must have no financial conflict of interest in the subject area of the editorial in question. In exceptional circumstances, the editor-in-chief may
decide to invite an editorial from an author who has on-going financial conflicts of interest that are relevant to the topic of the editorial. In this situation, a co-author will be appointed who is conflict-free, and will act as the senior author, having the last word on what is submitted, and acting as the corresponding author.

**Commentaries:** Authors of commentaries must declare their financial conflicts in the usual way. These will be published as an integral element of the commentary.

**Guidelines:** The BAD has a declaration of interests’ policy for guideline authors, which is in line with NICE requirements in accrediting the BAD for the process employed in producing clinical guidelines ([www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?itemtype=document&id=5785](http://www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?itemtype=document&id=5785)).

**Educational reviews:** The BJD does not tend to publish CPD-type educational reviews. Nevertheless, we agree with the BMJ policy that published educational material should not include authors with financial conflict of interest in the subject area of the educational review article.

**Acknowledgement:** This document is based on a similar document pertaining to the BMJ, and available to all from the BMJ web site. Thanks to Firouz Mohd Mustapa for his contributions to this document.

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**Relevant reading:**

All BJD COI Editorials over last 2 years