Conflict of interest: steps to action Funding Arbiter decisions

Version history

- Table 1. What the statement must include, where it should be located, and which What's New/publishing event to use
- Table 2. Template text for the noncompliance statement and What's New/publishing event (immediate response)
- Table 3. Template text to address compliance when completing a full update or revision, and What's New/publishing event (longer-term response)

If the Funding Arbiters identify a published review or protocol as not adhering to the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Commercial Sponsorship Policy, the Editorial & Methods Department (EMD) will contact the Managing Editor of the Cochrane Review Group (CRG) editorial team on behalf of the Funding Arbiters.

- If an update of an affected review is already planned, or is planned as a result of the Funding Arbiter decision, the Funding Arbiters will ask the CRG editorial team to make a statement within the review to identify it as noncompliant and set out a plan to become compliant.
- For a protocol, the Funding Arbiters will ask the CRG editorial team to make a statement within the protocol to identify it as noncompliant and set out a plan for it to be compliant when it is published as a review.
- If the Funding Arbiters ask for the protocol or review to be withdrawn because no update will be made, see the separate guidance.

Table 1 outlines what the statement must include, where it should be located, and which What's New/publishing event to use. Table 2 and Table 3 provide template text that CRGs can use in the affected review(s) or protocol(s) in their immediate response (stating noncompliance) and in their longer-term response (addressing compliance after a full update or amendment).

Table 1. What the statement must include, where it should be located, and which What's New/publishing event to use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The statement must:</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Include the following information:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clarify that the statement is from the Co-ordinating Editor (person responsible for protocols and reviews published by the CRG).</td>
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<td>• Record the date of the statement.</td>
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<td>• State that the review or protocol is not compliant with the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Commercial Sponsorship Policy.</td>
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<td>• Clarify that the next update to the review, or in the case of an affected protocol, the published review to follow, will have a majority of authors and the lead author free of conflicts of interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• For reviews, set a timeframe for the update, such as in six, nine, or 12 months. For protocols, set an estimated publication date or timeframe for the review to follow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Be added to the 'Declarations of interest' section</td>
<td>The 'Declarations of interest' section is the most prominent location for this information (accessible from the top and side navigation of published Cochrane Reviews).&lt;br&gt;The original text in the ‘Declarations of interest’ section must not be changed; only add the new statement or other content as agreed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Have an associated What's New/publishing event of 'Amended' (no new citation)</td>
<td>A ‘What’s New’ event must be added, to make changes transparent to readers and to alert the publisher to a new version of the review.&lt;br&gt;The event must be ‘Amended’ (no new citation) and have an appropriate description highlighting the change and location of the change.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Template text for the noncompliance statement and What's New/publishing event (immediate response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Template text</th>
<th>Notes on text and formatting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Table 3. Template text to address compliance when completing a full update or revision, and What's New/publishing event (longer-term response)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td><strong>Template text</strong></td>
<td><strong>Notes on text and formatting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarations of interest</td>
<td>Publication of update /revision to become compliant</td>
<td>To declare new conflicts of interest and to clarify history of conflicts of interest</td>
<td>For reviews: “When originally published, the authors declared no conflict of interest [or — the above/below conflicts of interest]. From [date], the following conflicts of interest were declared. These conflicts applied during the period that the review was in preparation.”</td>
<td>• Old declarations of interest statements and new declarations of interest statements should both be visible. • Clarify that the newly declared conflicts of interest applied during the period when the review was being prepared. Do not delete or overwrite the pre-existing declarations of interest text. •Italicize the statement to give readers a visual indication that something in this section has changed over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's New /publishing event</td>
<td>Publication of update /revision to become compliant</td>
<td>To alert readers to changes in the declarations of interest</td>
<td>For reviews: “The authors’ Declarations of interest have been updated to reflect the review's compliance with the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy.”</td>
<td>• The DOI link will need to be changed to link to each review’s own DOI section. • Include a link to the Cochrane conflict of interest policy and the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy, as best practice. • As in requirements listed in Table 1, the event for reviews must be ‘Amended’ (no new citation) and the event for protocols must be ‘Major Change’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Declarations of interest

**Following Funding Arbi**

- **request**

To state noncompliance and plan for updating revising to become compliant

- **For reviews:**

  "Clarification statement added from the Co-ordinating Editor on [date]: This review was found by the Cochrane Funding Arbi, post-publication, to be noncompliant with the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy. It will be updated by [date]. The update will have a majority of authors and lead author free of conflicts."  

- **For protocols:**

  "Clarification statement added from the Co-ordinating Editor on [date]: This protocol was found by the Cochrane Funding Arbi, post-publication, to be noncompliant with the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy. When it is published as a review, a majority of authors and the lead author will be free of conflicts. The review is expected to be published by [date]."

- **Notes on text and formatting**

  - Statement should be added below the original declarations of interest text. Do not delete or overwrite the pre-existing declarations of interest text.  
  - Include date in statement to make clear to readers the timeline of changes to the declarations of interests.  
  - Italicize the statement to give readers a visual indication that something in this section has changed over time.  
  - Include "post-publication" to show that the editors thought that what they were publishing was correct at the time.  
  - Include "by the Cochrane Funding Arbi" to show how noncompliance was drawn to our attention, and that the funding arbiters are Cochrane funding arbiters.  
  - Reviews: "It will be updated by [date]" could instead read "It will be updated within [X] months". In either instance, it remains necessary to date the statement itself, to make clear to readers the intended timeframe of the update.  
  - Reviews: "The update should be singular — not "future updates", for example.  
  - Protocols: "The review is expected to be published by [date]" could instead read "The review is expected to be published within [X] months" or "[X] years". In either instance, it remains necessary to date the statement itself, to make clear to readers the intended timeframe of publishing the compliant review.  
  - Include a link to the Cochrane conflict of interest policy and the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy, as best practice.

## What's New/publishing event

**Following Funding Arbi**

- **request**

To alert readers to statement of noncompliance plan for becoming compliant

- **For reviews:**

  "Clarification message from the Co-ordinating Editor added to the Declarations of interest statement about the review's compliance with the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy."

- **For protocols:**

  "Clarification message from the Co-ordinating Editor added to the Declarations of interest statement about the protocol's compliance with the Cochrane conflict of interest policy, which includes the relevant parts of the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy."

- **Notes on text and formatting**

  - The DOI link will need to be changed to link to each review's own DOI section.  
  - Include a link to the Cochrane conflict of interest policy and the Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy, as best practice.  
  - As in requirements listed in Table 1, the event for reviews must be ‘Amended’ (no new citation) and the event for protocols must be ‘Major Change’.  

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[Link to Cochrane Commercial Sponsorship Policy](https://www.cochrane.org/resources/cochrane-commercial-sponsorship-policy)