

# Conflict of interest: steps to action Research Integrity Editors and Col panel decisions

## Version history

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If the Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel identify a published review or protocol as not adhering to the [Cochrane conflict of interest policy](#), the Editorial & Methods Department (EMD) will contact the Managing Editor of the Cochrane Review Group (CRG) editorial team on behalf of the Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel.

- If an update of an affected review is already planned, or is planned as a result of the Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel decision, the Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel 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 Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel 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- If the Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel ask for the protocol or review to be withdrawn because no update will be made, see the [separate guidance](#).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

	The statement must:	Note
1	<p>Include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify that the statement is from the Co-ordinating Editor (person responsible for protocols and reviews published by the CRG).</li> <li>• Record the date of the statement.</li> <li>• State that the review or protocol is not compliant with the <a href="#">Cochrane conflict of interest policy</a>.</li> <li>• 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 (in the case of breaches of the 2014 Commercial Sponsorship policy) or that the published review will have 67% of authors and the first and last author free of relevant financial conflicts (in the case of breaches of the 2020 Col policy).</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	—
2	Be added to the 'Declarations of interest' section	<p>The 'Declarations of interest' section is the most prominent location for this information (accessible from the top and side navigation of published Cochrane Reviews).</p> <p>The original text in the 'Declarations of interest' section must not be changed; only add the new statement or other content as agreed.</p>
3	Have an associated What's New/publishing event of 'Amended' (no new citation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'What's New' event <b>must</b> be added, to make changes transparent to readers and to alert the publisher to a new version of the review.</li> <li>• The event <b>must</b> be 'Amended' (no new citation) and have an appropriate description highlighting the change and location of the change.</li> </ul>

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

Section	Time	Purpose	Template text	Notes on text and formatting
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Declarations of interest	Following Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel request	To state noncompliance and plan for updating/revising to become compliant	<p><b>For reviews:</b></p> <p><i>"Clarification statement added from the Co-ordinating Editor on [date]: This review was found by the Cochrane Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel, post-publication, to be noncompliant with the <a href="#">Cochrane conflict of interest policy</a>. It will be updated by [date]. The update will have [a majority of authors and lead author free of conflicts/67% of authors and the first and last author free of relevant financial conflicts - delete as appropriate depending on whether the 2014 or 2020 policy applies]."</i></p> <p><b>For protocols:</b></p> <p><i>"Clarification statement added from the Co-ordinating Editor on [date]: This protocol was found by the Cochrane Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel, post-publication, to be noncompliant with the <a href="#">Cochrane conflict of interest policy</a>. When it is published as a review it will have [a majority of authors and lead author free of conflicts/67% of authors and the first and last author free of relevant financial conflicts - delete as appropriate depending on whether the 2014 or 2020 policy applies]."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statement should be added <i>below</i> the original declarations of interest text. Do not delete or overwrite the pre-existing declarations of interest text.</li> <li>Include date in statement to make clear to readers the timeline of changes to the declarations of interests.</li> <li>Italicize the statement to give readers a visual indication that something in this section has changed over time.</li> <li>Include "post-publication" to show that the editors thought that what they were publishing was correct at the time.</li> <li>Include "by the Cochrane Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel" to show how noncompliance was drawn to our attention.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Reviews: "The update" should be singular –not "future updates", for example.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
What's New/publishing event	Following Research Integrity Editors and/or Col panel request	To alert readers to statement of noncompliance plan for becoming compliant	<p><b>For reviews:</b></p> <p>"Clarification message from the Co-ordinating Editor added to the <a href="#">Declarations of interest</a> statement about the review's compliance with the <a href="#">Cochrane conflict of interest policy</a>."</p> <p><b>For protocols:</b></p> <p>"Clarification message from the Co-ordinating Editor added to the <a href="#">Declarations of interest</a> statement about the protocol's compliance with the <a href="#">Cochrane conflict of interest policy</a>."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DOI link will need to be changed to link to each review/protocol's own DOI section.</li> <li>As in requirements listed in Table 1, the event for reviews <b>must</b> be 'Amended' (no new citation) and the event for protocols <b>must</b> be 'Major Change'.</li> </ul>

Table 3. Template text to address compliance when completing a full update or revision, and What's New/publishing event (longer-term response)

Section	Time	Purpose	Template text	Notes on text and formatting
Declarations of interest	Publication of update /revision to become compliant	To declare new conflicts of interest and to clarify history of conflicts of interest	<p><b>For reviews:</b></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Old declarations of interest statements and new declarations of interest statements should both be visible.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Italicize the statement to give readers a visual indication that something in this section has changed over time.</li> </ul>
What's New/publishing event	Publication of update /revision to become compliant	To alert readers to changes in the declarations of interest	<p><b>For reviews:</b></p> <p>"The authors' <a href="#">Declarations of interest</a> have been updated to reflect the review's compliance with the <a href="#">Cochrane conflict of interest policy</a>."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DOI link will need to be changed to link to each review's own DOI section.</li> <li>Include the template text provided here as part of the event description for whichever events are appropriate to the changes being made. (For guidance on choosing appropriate event(s), see <a href="#">As signing What's New Events</a>.)</li> </ul>