

[Insert DATE]

[ADDRESS of Decision Aid Producer]

Dear [Name of organization's primary contact],

On behalf of Dartmouth College's Preference Laboratory, I am writing to request your assistance with a study examining the competing interest policies of organizations that have produced at least five active patient decision aids.

As you are aware, there has been a concern that clinical practice guidelines have the potential to be influenced by the interests and ties of those who are asked to consider the evidence base in making recommendations. A similar concern has been voiced about the production of patient decision aids. Our research group wishes to investigate the extent to which the producers of patient decision aids examine the interests of those who are responsible for synthesizing the evidence, writing and producing patient decision aids.

I would therefore like to ask if your organization has a conflict of interest (COI) policy in place for managing the production of patient decision aids, or any other document that guides your practice and content production. If so, would you be willing to share a copy of your policy with us? We will undertake a comparative analysis of all the competing interests policies that we receive. We also intend to publish our findings. You are, of course, under no obligation to share your competing interest policy with us, but we will keep a record of your response on this topic.

If you are willing to participate, could you please:

1. Indicate how many patient decision aids your organization has published to date and confirm that those patient decision aids are regularly updated and maintained;
2. Specify whether they are available freely or commercially;
3. Describe how those decision aids are developed and how the evidence is synthesized;
4. Send us a copy of your competing interest policy and competing interest disclosure form or any other documents, which are used to manage the competing interests of the people who develop those decision aids;
5. Indicate whether you would be willing to let us name your organization in our published findings.

Please feel free to share any other information pertaining to your organization's stance on managing conflicts of interest. Thank you for your time and attention to this request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Glyn Elwyn BA MSc MD PhD