

Fall Retreat to Cover Conflicts of Interest in Scientific Publication

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As more scientific research is funded by industry, the potential for real or perceived conflicts of interest between scientific integrity and monetary goals is increasing. Conflicts of interest must be discussed openly in scientific journals if readers are to be able to critically assess the effect of the funding source on the research.

For that reason, CSE will hold a retreat on conflict of interest on 29-31 October 2004 at the Hyatt Lodge on the McDonald's Campus, near Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

Like last year's successful retreat, *The Journal's Role in Scientific Misconduct*, the 2004 conflict-of-interest retreat will allow editors to meet with peers and experts in a variety of fields for an intensive weekend of discussions in a rural

setting. Speakers will be invited from publishing, academe, industry, and government agencies.

Drummond Rennie, deputy editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, who is helping to organize the retreat, said the topic is timely. "The massive increase in the proportion of studies funded by commercial companies with an interest in the outcomes, coupled with the massive increase in spending on research by commercial companies with an interest in the design, conduct, analysis and interpretation of these studies, constitutes a clear danger to science and a pressing challenge for the journals that publish these studies", he wrote in an e-mail conversation. If the scientific community cannot eliminate such conflicts, then at least editors must ensure that potential conflicts are openly disclosed, he wrote.

That journals currently take a variety

of approaches to conflicts of interest suggests that editors have not reached consensus on the issue.

CSE's editorial policy on conflict of interest (available at www.CouncilScienceEditors.org) discusses some of the ways in which journals address the topic. Many journals ask authors to disclose potential conflicts when a paper is submitted and include the information in the published article. Other journals do not publish authors' disclosures. Some make the conflict-of-interest information available to peer reviewers; others do not. Some journals refuse articles (particularly review articles or editorials) written by persons with financial conflicts of interest that affect the topic of the article.

Program, faculty, and registration information about the retreat will be available at www.CouncilScienceEditors.org.