

Financial relationships between biomedical companies and organizations

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Financial relationships between biomedical companies and organizations that produce clinical practice guidelines are common, but often unreported.

Sixty-three per cent of organizations that published clinical practice guidelines on the National Guideline Clearinghouse website in 2012 reported receiving funds from biomedical companies, but these relationships were seldom disclosed in the guidelines, according to a new study published by Henry Stelfox and [colleagues](#) from the University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada, in *PLOS Medicine*.

Through cross-sectional surveys and a review of the websites of organizations that produced clinical practice guidelines published on the National Guidelines Clearinghouse website in 2012, the researchers collected information about sources of funding, conflict of interest policies, and [disclosures](#) of conflicts of interest. Of the 95 organizations producing clinical practice guidelines, 80% reported having a policy for managing conflicts of interest. In the clinical practice guidelines, disclosure statements (disclosing presence or absence of [financial relationships](#) with biomedical companies) for direct funding sources to produce the guideline were available in 65% (188/290) of guidelines; disclosure statements for financial relationships of guideline committee members were available in 51% (147/290); but only 1% (4/290) included disclosure of financial relationships of the organizations producing the guideline. Furthermore, clinical practice guidelines produced by organizations with more comprehensive conflict of interest

policies included relatively fewer positive (?9%) and more negative (+32%) recommendations regarding patented biomedical products and were more likely to include disclosure statements for direct funding sources (+31%) and the financial relationships of the guideline committee members (+36%).

While the study was limited by the use of the National Guidelines Clearinghouse as the single source of clinical [practice guidelines](#) and self-report of survey responses and website postings, the findings suggest that [clinical practice guidelines](#) are vulnerable to influence from biomedical companies.

The authors say: "Our study highlights the need for an effective policy to manage organizational conflicts of interest and disclosure of financial relationships."

More information: Paul Campsall et al, Financial Relationships between Organizations That Produce Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Biomedical Industry: A Cross-Sectional Study, *PLOS Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1002029](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002029)

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