

## Independence of Research and Conflicts of Interest Policies

### **POLICY REGARDING INDEPENDENCE OF RESEARCH**

PRACI is committed to the highest standards of academic quality and credibility for our research processes and procedures. We ensure these standards through rigorous internal review, peer review, and a transparent process for selecting and undertaking research projects.

While the credibility of the research any organization produces should stand on the quality and reliability of that research alone, other protocols or precautions are often necessary. PRACI strictly adheres to the following policies:

- PRACI engages in research and educational activities that advance the mission of the organization. This includes research and educational activities that may run counter to the opinions and interests of the organizations and individuals providing financial support to PRACI.
- Endeavouring to maintain a broad and diverse base of support, PRACI accepts financial support from numerous sources for research and educational activities that further its mission. All PRACI work product must be capable of withstanding rigorous peer review of its quality and reliability. Therefore, PRACI financial supporters have absolutely no influence or control over the research design, methodology, analysis, or findings of PRACI research projects, nor do they have influence or control over the content of educational programs. Offers of financial support predicated on such expectations are not accepted.
- PRACI will not engage in research or educational activities that are co-sponsored with non-academic organizations that support PRACI financially.

*Key support partners do not influence the research that is being conducted through PRACI. Key support partners support PRACI so that researchers must be able to design and conduct their studies in an unbiased objective manner that is free from conflicts caused by significant financial involvement with the commercial sponsors of the practice based research network.*

(This statement can be added to the conflict of interest section of any manuscript published from PRACI sub-studies.)

- To ensure that supporters understand our commitment to independent research, the following paragraph will be furnished to all organizations that provide or are considering providing PRACI with financial support:

*PRACI is committed to the highest standards of academic quality and credibility, and to ensuring that our work stands up to rigorous peer review. PRACI scholars independently pursue a research agenda and educational activities that advance our mission. PRACI does not engage in research or educational activities directed or influenced in any way by financial supporters.*

- This policy and PRACI practices will be reviewed annually to ensure that PRACI is in compliance with its provisions, transparent and faithful to its intent.

## **POLICY REGARDING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

PRACI facilitates the publication of research that meets rigorous standards of scholarship and seeks to avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest exists when professional judgment concerning a primary interest (such as patients' welfare or the validity of research) may be influenced by a secondary interest (such as financial gain or personal rivalry). A conflict of interest may arise for authors when they have a financial interest that may influence – probably without their knowing – their interpretation of their results or those of others. We believe that to make the best decision on how to deal with a request to conduct a substudy we should know about any such conflict of interest that the authors may have. We are not aiming to eradicate conflicts of interests – they are almost inevitable. We will not reject applications to conduct a substudy simply because the authors have a conflict of interest, but we will publish a declaration on the website associated with the description of the project as to whether or not the authors have conflicts of interests and request the conflict of interest to be communicated to PRACI members before they are asked to participate in the study.

This statement provides guidelines and procedures for the identification and resolution of real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest, pecuniary or otherwise that may arise in the course of PRACI-supported research.

### Definitions:

- An affected person is any author or researcher supported by PRACI who has a financial interest in the research in question, as defined below.
- An affected person has a financial interest if the individual has, directly or indirectly, any ownership, investment, or compensation arrangement such that he or she stands to benefit financially from the research in question.
- The term conflict of interest means any interest (financial, intellectual property, or relationships with individuals or organisations) that could significantly impair the affected person's objectivity and/or undermine the academic integrity of the research in question. For a conflict of interest to exist, there must be an interest that may bias or appear to bias the affected person's research, as for instance might result from a consulting engagement on related topics, although this policy is not restricted to that particular instantiation of a conflict of interest.

### Procedures:

- In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an affected person has a duty to disclose the existence of the interest prior to initiating the research in question, or at the earliest opportunity if the conflict was not known before the initiation of the research. The affected person must disclose all material facts to the PRACI Steering Committee.
- In order to determine whether a conflict of interest exists, the PRACI Steering Committee, shall review any disclosures regarding the interest of any affected persons who suspect they might have a conflict of interest while working with PRACI.
- After exercising due diligence the PRACI Steering Committee shall determine whether a conflict of interest exists. If one is found to exist, PRACI will determine an appropriate resolution. This outcome may occur even if there is a strong appearance of a conflict of interest but no actual conflict. If no conflict or relevant appearance of conflict is found, PRACI will memorialize the decision, and the substudy in question may proceed accordingly or with appropriate modified terms as agreed to by the affected person.
- If the PRACI Steering Committee has reason to believe an individual failed to disclose an actual or potential conflict of interest, the PRACI Steering Committee will seek corrective action. If a determination is made that the individual did not disclose a possible conflict of interest before initiating the substudy in question, the PRACI Steering Committee may at its sole discretion terminate the project and sever professional ties with the affected person.
- In addition to PRACI's own requirements, PRACI requires that all research teams conducting research projects through PRACI adhere to the conflict of interest policies of the journals and outlets in which they publish.