
Competing Interests Policy for AALAS Journals

The goal of this Competing Interests Policy for the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) journals, namely *Comparative Medicine* and *JAALAS*, is to provide guidance for authors and reviewers of manuscripts and the editors and editorial staff members who will be actively participating in the publication process. The intent of this policy is to enable and ensure the highest possible standards for publication integrity. Competing interests can take many forms, and disclosure of such interests will elevate the integrity of the publications by increasing editorial transparency. The policy will allow the laboratory animal community to better evaluate the published literature with regard to the potential influence of competing interests.

The specific wording of this document has been modified from existing policies of other scientific journals, including the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics*, *Lab Animal*, and the *British Medical Journal*. The policy also uses language supported by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors and the Council of Science Editors.

This policy is primarily focused on those competing interests that might directly influence the author, the reviewers, the editorial staff, or the organization of AALAS and its business partners. Promulgating and adhering to this policy will enable all parties to make informed decisions about the validity of published data, conclusions, and opinions presented by the author, yet will not be so proscriptive as to stifle or limit the content or intent of scientific publications.

Articles are published in the AALAS journals based solely on merit, and manuscripts are to be selected fairly and without regard to potential benefits or financial impact on manufacturers, producers, and vendors of laboratory animal products. The editorial staff will determine the appropriateness of the manuscript for potential publication in the AALAS journals prior to submission for peer review.

Authors

Scope. The AALAS Competing Interest Policy for authors is considered to be applicable to all authors of any published scientific articles in AALAS journals, including, but not limited to original research, scientific overviews, and clinical case reports, as well as editorials, and letters to the editor. The corresponding author of each submitted article is required to complete and submit the disclosure form on Manuscript Central as part of the manuscript submission process. This declaration incorporates the competing interests of all authors, not just the corresponding author.

Disclosure of Author Competing Interests.

- Employment, consultantships (with or without compensation), personal gifts of over \$100 value, paid travel expenses of over \$100 (excluding research-related travel), provision of expert witness, or receipt of honoraria of over \$100, within the past 3 y, with or from any organization having a direct commercial interest in the subject matter discussed in the manuscript.

- Direct equity ownership in a company having a direct commercial interest in the subject matter discussed in the manuscript. This does not apply to mutual funds or similar financial instruments not controlled by the author(s).
- Receipt of non-purchased research equipment or supplies to the author's institution, within the past 3 y, from an organization having a direct commercial interest in the subject matter discussed in the manuscript.
- Patents, pending patents, or copyrights that the author holds or has applied for that may appear to bias the presentation of information in the manuscript.
- Any financial support to the author(s) or the author's institution for the research or other information presented in the manuscript from an organization having a direct commercial interest in the subject matter discussed in the manuscript.
- Any publication restrictions imposed on the author(s) by a study sponsor.
- Any involvement by a study sponsor in the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data or opinions.
- Any other professional or personal circumstances that may appear to bias the presentation of information in the manuscript (e.g., author's spouse sells a competing product; author has accepted a position with a competing organization). This does not apply to memberships in professional organizations.

Reviewers

Peer review of submitted manuscripts is an important component of the process by which scientific journals determine suitability for publication. The AALAS Competing Interest Policy for reviewers is intended to be sufficiently inclusive to allow the editors to make an informed decision on the ability of an individual reviewer to objectively evaluate manuscripts that have been submitted for publication in AALAS journals.

Competing interests for reviewers, if not acknowledged, can affect the quality and prestige of the journal—either by inclusion of inappropriate work or exclusion of valid work. Therefore, in the most basic sense, competing interests for reviewers can be divided into those that might unfairly favor an author and publication of his/her manuscript, and those that would disfavor the author and inhibit publication. Both aspects of conflict for reviewers are addressed.

Scope. The AALAS Competing Interest Policy for reviewers is applicable to all Editorial Review Board members and to ad hoc reviewers selected to evaluate the publication merits of manuscripts submitted to AALAS journals that warrant such review (e.g., original research, scientific overviews, clinical case reports). Reviewers asked to review a manuscript by editorial staff must disclose any personal, financial, or organizational competing interests relevant to the manuscript in question.

Disclosures of Reviewer Competing Interests.

- Financial or affiliated relationships such that the outcome of the publication decision would favorably or unfavorably

influence the career efforts of either party.

- Collaborative working relationships such that successful publication of the manuscript would help the career efforts of both author and reviewer, even though the reviewer is not listed as an author on the manuscript in question.
- Competitive working relationships such that successful publication of the manuscript would help the career efforts of the author while possibly hindering the career efforts of the reviewer. In such cases, obstruction of publication could be seen as beneficial to the reviewer.
- Employment of the reviewer by a commercial interest (either as a full employee or as a consultant) that could either benefit, or be disadvantaged, by the publication of said manuscript.
- Direct equity ownership (e.g., stocks) in a company having a direct commercial interest in the subject matter discussed in the manuscript. This does not apply to mutual funds or similar financial instruments not controlled by the reviewer(s).
- Any other professional or personal circumstances that may appear to bias the review of a given manuscript (e.g., reviewer's spouse sells a competing product; reviewer holds a position with a competing organization). This does not apply to memberships in professional organizations.

Editors

Editors are responsible for maintaining the highest possible standards in evaluating manuscript contributions to *Comparative Medicine* and *JAALAS*, while maintaining the integrity and mission of AALAS as an organization.

Scope. For any particular manuscript selected to undergo peer review or for those manuscripts directly solicited for potential publication in an AALAS journal, the editor should disclose personal, financial, or organizational competing interests relevant to the manuscript in question and recuse themselves from deliberations regarding publication of the particular manuscript(s) under discussion. In these instances, the editor will ask a guest editor or associate editor to oversee the review process and make the final decision on the manuscript, as long as they too have no competing personal, financial, or organizational interests. Editors who make final decisions about the submitted manuscripts must not have personal, professional, or financial involvement relevant to any of the issues they might evaluate. Editors will not be involved in the review of manuscripts where they are an author.

Disclosures of Editorial Competing Interests.

- Ownership of equity of more than \$10,000 in a private or public company in the laboratory animal field, such that successful publication of a particular manuscript under review would further the career efforts of or constitute

financial incentives for the editor.

- Income greater than \$1,000 annually from any single private or public commercial entity in the laboratory animal field, excluding any contractual honorarium received from AALAS.
- Research support in excess of \$50,000 annually from a private or public for-profit company in the laboratory animal field.
- Prospective employment with a private or public company or organization that has a direct commercial interest in the subject matter of a submitted manuscript.
- Current institutional or intra-institutional mentored or personal relationship with any of the authors on manuscripts.
- Personal benefit derived from associations with individuals or entities that are potentially impacted negatively or positively by the publication of particular manuscripts.

Editorial Freedom

Editorial freedom, as defined by the World Association of Medical Editors and as supported by AALAS, states that "editorial freedom or independence is the concept that the editor-in-chief should have full authority over the editorial content of their journal. Journal owners should not interfere in the evaluation, selection, or editing of individual manuscripts either directly or by creating an environment that strongly influences decisions. Editors should base decisions on the validity of the work and its importance to the journal's readers not on the commercial success of the journal. Editors should be free to express critical but responsible views about all aspects of medicine without fear of retribution, even if these views might conflict with the commercial goals of the publisher. Editors and editors' organizations have the obligation to support the concept of editorial freedom and to draw major transgressions of such freedom to the attention of the international medical, academic, and lay communities."

AALAS publications derive income from advertisers, creating an additional area for potential competing interests. Editorial decisions should not be influenced by advertising revenue; therefore, advertising functions of the journals must be independent of publishing and editorial functions. Advertisers and donors should have no control over editorial material under any circumstance. Advertising should not be sold on the condition that it will appear in the same issue as a particular manuscript. Editors must have full and final authority for approving advertisements and enforcing advertising policy.

Editors and associate editors, with assistance from ad hoc reviewers, are entrusted with the ability to determine the accuracy and appropriateness of studies submitted for publication. Overall, the manuscripts published in the AALAS journals should advance responsible laboratory animal care and use to benefit people and animals.