

Queensland Clinical Guidelines

Translating evidence into best clinical practice


Maternity and Neonatal

Conflict of interest



Approvals

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Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Comments
V1.0	21/10/2011	QCG	
V2.0	01/03/2017	QCG	Amended definitions. introduction and processes

Development

The Queensland Clinical Guideline conflict of interest statement was developed with consideration of the definitions, themes and recommendations of:

- Academic literature concerning declaring and managing conflicts of interest in guideline development and research—Peer reviewed journals, available online, in English, indexed on PubMed
- Conflict of interest statements and advice provided by prominent guideline developers including:
 - National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
 - Australian Research Council (ARC), Cancer Council (NSW, Australia)
 - Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG)
 - The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE; United Kingdom)
 - Guidelines International Network (G-I-N; Europe)
- Australian National and State Government Agencies including:
 - Queensland Government
 - New South Wales Department of Health
 - Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC)
 - Australian Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and research

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1 Purpose

This document outlines conflict of interest obligations, evaluation, management and reporting applicable to all people contributing to Queensland Clinical Guidelines.

2 Principles

Queensland Clinical Guidelines (QCG) provides guidance and information to clinicians and parents/families about aspects of clinical care. The guidance and information provided is publically available and subject to reasonable public scrutiny. Maintaining quality and clinician/consumer confidence is essential.

QCG's development processes (e.g. synthesis & assessment of evidence, working party selection, statewide consultation) and decision making are conducted in a manner that maintains the integrity, legitimacy and impartiality of guidance and information.

All people contributing to QCG including Steering Committee members, Clinical Leads, Working Party members and Project/Program Officers are required to:

- Act with integrity, objectivity, openness and honesty
- Be accountable for their decisions and actions
- Be subject to an appropriate level of scrutiny
- Declare interests as described in Section 4.1 Declaring conflicts of interest

The intent of declaring conflicts of interest (COI) is to:

- Recognise, evaluate and manage risks of bias or influence that may alter perception of QCG's integrity, legitimacy and impartiality
- Retain relevant expertise to the maximum possible extent

3 Definitions and sources of conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest arise when a personal, financial or other interest has the potential to, or could be perceived to compromise or bias the performance of an organisation. Conflicts of interest can directly or indirectly benefit or advantage an individual, or benefit, advantage or disadvantage others. This applies to an individuals' personal, professional and business interests and may extend to the personal, professional and business interests of relatives, associates and other institutions/organisations. Common sources of conflicts of interest are outlined in Table 1.

Actual, perceived/apparent, and potential COIs are regarded equally as they can each hold significant implications for risk of bias, organisational performance and clinician/consumer confidence. Having a COI does not imply wrongdoing or dishonourable behaviour, and does not in itself preclude involvement in QCG activities nor detract from the value of contribution. Living with a disease or condition or having a family member in that position is not regarded as a conflict of interest.

Table 1. Common sources of conflicts of interest

Type of conflict	Sources of conflicts of interest
Direct Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash, gifts and honoraria • Grants • Paid memberships • Paid or financially assisted invitations to speak • Contracts/consultancies • Services or equipment
Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic/Career advancement • Publications or research on a topic • Community standing • Attachment to personal beliefs, convictions or opinions • Clinical revenue streams • Inter-personal/social relationships • Institutional affiliations • Board or committee membership • Family and associate interests

4 Conflict of interest processes

4.1 Declaring conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interests should be declared as outlined in Table 2. The onus is on the individual to recognise and declare conflicts of interest, and update declarations in the event of significant changes. If you are unsure whether an interest could be considered a COI, declare the interest or contact us at:

guidelines@health.qld.gov.au

Table 2. Declaring conflicts of interest

Aspect	Consideration
Who needs to declare COIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee members Clinical Leads Working Party members Project/Program Officers Other parties contributing to QCG
When to declare COIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before contributing to QCG; or As soon as possible when a conflict of interest becomes apparent
What interests to declare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider all potential sources of COIs [Refer to Section 3] Actual, perceived/apparent, and potential conflicts of interest relevant to the current contribution Current COIs and COIs occurring within the past three years COIs that become apparent during the current contribution
How to declare COIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise QCG in writing (email: guidelines@health.qld.gov.au); or Working party members: Complete the COI section of the online expression of interest form. Steering Committee members may advise verbally at the start of steering committee meetings (note: will be included in meeting minutes)
What to declare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature of the conflict The situation or circumstance If direct financial COIs exist, include the estimated gross value

4.2 Evaluating and managing conflicts

Evaluation and management is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Evaluation and management of declared conflicts of interest

Aspect	Process
Review and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The QCG Steering Committee will review all declared conflicts of interest Declared conflicts of interest will be evaluated by considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expertise and perspective that the individual could provide Nature and degree of the conflict Potential impact on clinician and consumer perceptions of integrity, legitimacy and impartiality
Outcome decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures may include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action Restrict participation in discussion and/or decision making relating to aspects of the guidance or information in development Non-participation
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declared conflicts of interests will be recorded on a register that will include names, dates, a description of the matter, actions and outcome decisions

4.3 Sensitive conflicts of interest

Sensitive conflicts of interest arise when COI declaration, review and management described in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 has the potential to directly or indirectly disadvantage the individual with respect to their personal, professional or business interests.

Sensitive conflicts of interest can be declared directly to the QCG Project Officer, QCG Manager or QCG Director. With consent of the individual, the person receiving the declaration may seek assistance from/ refer to an appropriate party to review and evaluate the declared COI. Evaluation considerations, outcome decisions and documentation are as outline in Table 3.

4.4 Disclosures

Queensland Clinical Guidelines will not disclose details of declared COIs except:

- For the purpose of review and evaluation as described in Section 4.2 and Section 4.3; or
- Where legally required to disclose details (e.g. Right to Information processes); or
- With consent from the individual who declared their interests

An aggregate count of direct financial and indirect COIs declared by working party members is included in each guideline supplement.

Queensland Clinical Guidelines is subject to the *Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld)* and *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)* and is committed to meeting the Queensland Government transparency and accountability requirements. All declared interests including sensitive COIs are subject to Right to Information processes.

Consent to disclose details of a declared COI may be requested from the individual in some circumstances, for example in responding to requests from the Department of Health or a Hospital and Health Service (HHS) relating to governance/compliance of QCG and associated departments/units. QCG may disclose details of a declared COI to Metro North HHS lawyers if the disclosure is for the purpose of obtaining confidential legal advice in a matter to which that fact is relevant.

5 Contact and further information

Contact Queensland Clinical Guidelines, Queensland Health: guidelines@health.qld.gov.au | 07 3131 6777

Further information is available from:

- Right to Information and accessing Queensland Health information
<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/access-info/default.asp>
- Queensland Government Conduct and Performance (for Queensland Government employees)
<https://www.qld.gov.au/gov/conduct-and-performance>
- Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland
<https://www.oic.qld.gov.au/>