

## RELATIONSHIPS & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY

American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Neurology Institute

**1. Application & Definition.** This Relationships & Conflicts of Interest Policy (“Policy”) applies to individuals serving the American Academy of Neurology (“AAN”) and the American Academy of Neurology Institute (“AANI”) (collectively, “Academy”), in capacities including: AAN members or nonmembers serving as officers, committee members, faculty members, clinical practice guideline (and related products) or quality measure developers, authors, consultants, or other positions of official responsibility or leadership for the Academy, its publications or education programs (“Person”). A Person has a conflict of interest in a situation where their professional responsibilities, such as patient welfare or their Academy role or service, are or may be compromised by the influence of financial gain or a relationship with another entity that confers personal benefit.

**2. Importance.** Conflicts of interest are a matter of concern for the Academy. Persons serving in official capacities have a fiduciary duty to exercise impartial judgments for the best interests of the Academy and AAN members. The presence of a private interest may impair their ability to exercise competent judgment and objectivity in their official capacity. Conflicts of interest may also diminish the confidence of members and the public in the quality of the Academy’s publications, programs and operations.

**3. Resolution of Conflicts.** Conflicts of interests can be resolved or lessened through several strategies.

- a. Avoidance. Serious conflicts should be avoided altogether by not serving in the selected capacity for the Academy in situations in which there is a serious conflict of interest.
- b. Withdrawal. Persons with serious conflicts wishing to retain their official Academy responsibility can divest the conflicting interest or withdraw from the conflicting relationship.
- c. Disclosure. Disclosure does not eliminate the conflict but mitigates it insofar as it permits others to become aware of the conflict, to monitor the Person’s performance, and to consider its effect when interpreting the Person’s judgments, publications or presentations. Disclosure is the appropriate remedy for mitigating most instances of conflicts of interest.

The appropriate Board of Directors (AAN or AANI) has the ultimate responsibility of determining what limitations or actions may be necessary to protect the organization.

**4. Relationship Disclosures.** Disclosure of conflicts of interest to responsible officials of the Academy is an ethical responsibility of the Person having the conflict. However, Persons may be uncertain whether a relationship constitutes a conflict of interest for purposes of the Academy role, program, product or activity. Therefore, at the beginning of a Person’s term of service for the Academy, including on the Board of Directors, committee, subcommittee, task force, clinical practice guideline (and related products) and quality measure development panels, or before a Person gives an educational presentation at an Academy meeting, or authors an article in an Academy publication or product, the Person must complete an appropriate relationship disclosure form. This form requires Persons’ providing service to the Academy in various capacities to disclose all relationships with certain entities (including Commercial Interests/industry, contract research organizations, group purchasing organizations, and other types of external organizations) in certain contexts, including those the Person believes may constitute a conflict of interest. This general disclosure allows the Academy’s appropriate Reviewing Authority (defined below) to determine which relationships, if any, constitute a conflict of interest.

The Academy Boards have approved the relationship disclosure form, available at <https://www.aan.com/disclosures/portal> (“Relationship Disclosure Form”), with the understanding that certain activities may need to adjust or add to the language of the Relationship Disclosure Form to meet their specific disclosure requirements. Whenever possible, the Relationship Disclosure Form will be used across Academy activities to minimize the need for Persons to complete a separate form for each activity.

**5. Administrative Review & Action.** The following is the process for reviewing relationships for conflicts of interest. Academy activities requiring additional procedural steps for conflicts of interest review may do so with approval by the appropriate Board of Directors.

- a. The following table provides who is responsible for reviewing submitted Relationship Disclosure Forms:

<b>Person Submitting Disclosure Forms</b>	<b>Reviewing Authority</b>
AAN/AANI Boards of Directors (including CEO)	President/Chair
President/Chair	AAN/AANI Boards of Directors
Appointees to outside organizations	President/Chair
Editors-in-Chief of Academy publications or products	President/Chair
Associate editors of Academy publications or products	Applicable Editor-in-Chief
Authors and co-authors submitting works to Academy publications or products	Associate editors of applicable publications or products
Peer reviewers of applicable Academy publications	Associate editors of applicable publications
Chairs of standing committees, task forces, joint coordinating councils, or related entities	President/Chair
Members of standing committees, task forces, joint coordinating councils, or related entities	Chair of applicable standing committee, task force, joint coordinating council, or related entity
Chair of subcommittees or workgroups	Chair of applicable standing committee
Members of subcommittees or workgroups	Chair of applicable subcommittees or workgroups
Annual Meeting education program directors	Conference Subcommittee
Annual Meeting education program faculty	Conference Subcommittee
Annual Meeting scientific program directors	Science Committee
Annual Meeting scientific program faculty	Science Committee
Authors of Clinical Practice Guidelines or related products	Chair, Guideline Subcommittee, and Lead Methodologist
Guideline Methodologists	Chair, Quality Committee
Authors of Performance Measures	Chair, Quality Measures Subcommittee
Section Chair and Vice Chair (both current and nominees)	Sections and Subspecialties Subcommittee
Trainees, trainers, and mentors in Academy leadership training or advocacy skills programs	Leadership Development Committee or applicable program directors/leaders
AAN Staff	CEO

- b. Copies of completed Relationship Disclosure Forms will be provided to the Reviewing Authority and the appropriate Executive Team member, for review before the Person begins their work for the Academy. Completed Forms will be reviewed in accordance with the process described in

this Policy and, as applicable, the specific review processes described for certain Academy activities (see Appendix A).

- c. Possible courses of action the Reviewing Authority (which may vary to meet the specific needs of the Academy activity) may take with respect to each Relationship Disclosure Form include:
  - i. There are no relationships noted, then no action is required.
  - ii. There are relationships noted, but no conflicts of interest found. The relationships may be disclosed to fully inform the audience/readers.
  - iii. There are relationships noted, and possible conflicts of interest found:
    - i. The severity of the conflict is such that it is compatible with concurrent maintenance of the Person's official Academy capacity and the conflicting interest or relationship. The situation should be monitored carefully and the relationship must be disclosed to fully inform the audience/readers.
    - ii. The severity of the conflict is such that the Person must be removed from the official Academy capacity (e.g., must not serve as an Academy committee member, author, or faculty member), must divest the conflicting interest, or must withdraw from the conflicting relationship.
- d. When considering Relationship Disclosure Forms and possible courses of action or in instances of disagreement between a Person and the Reviewing Authority, any Reviewing Authority may consult with the President. The President may (at the President's discretion) bring such matters to the Executive Committee for review and decision-making. The Executive Committee may consult with the Ethics, Law and Humanities Committee.

**6. Organizational Conflicts with Commercial Interests.** A complex set of conflicts may accompany relationships of the Academy with "Commercial Interests<sup>1</sup>." A "Commercial Interest" is any entity producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on, patients, or is otherwise involved in and seeking to profit from activities related to the provision of health care. Commercial Interests include pharmaceutical, medical device, and scientific product companies, manufacturers of health-related wearable products, group purchasing organizations, pharmacy benefit managers, contract research organizations, electronic health record companies, health care technology companies, insurers, and advertising, marketing, or communication firms whose clients are commercial interests). This Policy seeks to recognize and protect the benefits of these relationships while avoiding conflicts of interest that may arise. The Academy has functioning policies in several areas where these relationships with Commercial Interests, including the *Principles Governing Academy Relationships with External Sources of Support*.

*Policy History: Initially approved by the AAN Ethics and Humanities Subcommittee April 13, 1997; approved by the AAN Practice Committee August 24, 1997; approved by the AAN Board of Directors October 4, 1997, and published in Neurology (1998;50:332-334). Amended by the AAN and AANPA Executive Committees on February 21, 2008; ratified by the AAN and AANPA Boards of Directors on March 7, 2008 (AAN Policy 2008-06; AANPA Policy 2008-05). Amended by the AAN and AANI Boards of Directors on September 7, 2017. Amended by the AAN and AANI Boards of Directors on August 20, 2020. Amended by the AAN and AANI Boards of Directors on November 10, 2021.*

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<sup>1</sup> "Commercial Interests" encompass the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education's definition of "ineligible companies" from the *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education*

## **Appendix A**

- Implementing the AAN Conflict of Interest Policy for the Board, Committees, Subcommittees, Work Groups, and Related AAN Entities
- Implementing the AAN Conflict of Interest Policy for CME Programming
- Implementing the AAN Conflict of Interest Policy for Guidelines and Case Definitions - Clinical Practice Guideline Process Manual
- Relationships and Disclosures of Interest - Quality Measurement Manual
- Conflict of Interest and Disclosure – *Neurology*® Journals