Reviewer's report

Title: Underreporting of conflicts of interest in clinical practice guidelines: cross sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 5 March 2013

Reviewer: Susan L Norris

Reviewer's report:

General comments
1. Although the findings and general methods are not new, this is an interesting manuscript that again shows how prevalent are conflicts of interest among guideline developers and the high rate of inaccuracy of disclosures. The disclosure rate of 2% is extraordinary. The use of the Danish Health and Medicines Authority list is a novel and valid approach. The authors are to be commended on a well-written manuscript with thoughtfully performed research.

Major compulsory revisions
1. Why are authors' COI not disclosed in this guideline cohort? The fact that only 1 guideline included a COI statement is extraordinary. Did the organization that produced this guideline have any other guidelines included in this cohort? Do any of the 14 organizations have COI disclosure policies? Understanding the policies will help to inform the reasons for the low rate of disclosure. Perhaps exploring the policies is beyond the scope of the study, but the discussion section should at least make note of this important factor.

Minor compulsory revisions
1. Discussion, page 12: I think that the finding of the prevalence of conflicts of interest may not be as generalizable as the authors suggest. Engagement of physicians with industry varies significantly across countries, as the authors note on page 13. I am also not surprised that a higher percentage of US physicians have conflicts (reference 30), as there are major cultural differences across countries.

2. In this same paragraph on page 12, I think the concepts of accuracy and of (real) prevalence of COI among guideline authors needs to be clearly distinguished. The conflict of interest disclosure and management policies affects both the “accuracy” (how the form/instructions read can affect what is disclosed) and the prevalence (what information is requested).

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I have received funding to study conflict of interest in guideline development and I have published on this topic. My prior work resembles the methods used in this study.

I declare that I have no other competing interests.