

Fostering transparency in Pfizer supported publications

Public trust in pharmaceutical company supported publications requires that authorship is correctly attributed, medical writers if involved in a publication are recognised, and all sources of potential bias are disclosed including pharmaceutical industry funding.

To facilitate adherence to the standards mentioned above it is important that pharmaceutical companies develop a publication policy detailing the company's authorship criteria and disclosure requirements.

Pfizer's publication policy, which is available publicly, supports the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) criteria for authorship for all Pfizer supported publications. It further states that all individuals who deserve authorship based on the criteria should be named in the byline and those who do not should be acknowledged elsewhere. The ICMJE guidelines are applied to both Pfizer employees and external authors.

The policy also stipulates that medical writers must work under the direction of the authors and be recognized in the resulting publication; either as an author if they meet the authorship criteria or as a contributor in the acknowledgement section.

Pfizer's policy also addresses the role of marketing in publications. Commercial colleague involvement in peer reviewed publications, either medical journals or congresses, is not allowed. Marketing colleagues cannot author, comment on and/or influence the development of peer reviewed publications.

Developing a policy is only the first step; creating awareness of the policy and training are essential components of implementation. In Pfizer US over the last few years, in an effort to ensure external authors are aware of the ICMJE guidelines on authorship and the requirement to acknowledge medical writing assistance and disclose

financial support, Pfizer sends out a standard letter to each external author of a Pfizer-supported manuscript at the start of the manuscript. The letter explicitly states the ICMJE criteria for authorship and Pfizer's policy on disclosure of support. Each author is requested to sign a form acknowledging that they will adhere to the authorship guidelines and disclosure policy.

Pfizer's medical colleagues as well as publication vendors contracted to provide medical writing support receive computer-based training including a short test on Pfizer's publication policy.

Ongoing oversight of adherence to the policy is achieved via a checklist that is completed prior to journal submission for every Pfizer-supported manuscript. The checklist requires members of the Pfizer publication team to sign off on adherence to the authorship criteria and that all Pfizer support has been disclosed in the manuscript. To facilitate appropriate disclosure of Pfizer support, standard acknowledgement language has been developed, e.g. "The study was sponsored by Pfizer" and "Editorial support was provided by <name> at <company/affiliation> and was funded by Pfizer Inc".

The checklist also requires members of the team to check that the manuscript is consistent with the information registered on clinicaltrials.gov and that the data are consistent with the data tables and that the data support the interpretation.

By instituting a publication policy, educating/training authors and medical writers and providing oversight Pfizer has demonstrated its commitment to integrity and transparency in publications.

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TWS Editorial Meeting

EMWA's 30th Conference

If you would like to become involved with article writing, copyediting, proof reading, or have suggestions or questions, or just want to know what is going on at your journal, you are very welcome to come to an informal TWS editorial meeting to be held during EMWA's 30th Conference in Lisbon.

Please make a note in your conference diary:

17.30 Friday, 14 May 2010, in room Obidos B on floor 0 at Hotel Tiara Park Atlantic, Lisbon

So many questions in a sentence with just 79 characters!

The postdilution volume was either 500, 1000 or 1500 mL/h, and rarely 2000 mL/h.

The author asked me: '(1) Do I need to use *either*, and (2) should the *and* before *rarely* be an *or*, and (3) do I need commas around *rarely*?'

Check out your answers with mine on page 68

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