EHA Clinical Guidelines – Conflict of Interest (CoI) Management

Executive Summary

The European Hematology Association (EHA) has established a structured process to identify, evaluate, and manage conflicts of interest in guideline development. The goal is to ensure transparency, credibility, and unbiased recommendations. Key components include mandatory disclosure, systematic assessment of interests, clear categorization of CoIs, and implementation of proportionate management actions. Oversight is provided by a dedicated committee.

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1. Why CoI Management Matters

Effective CoI management is essential to:

- Meet international quality standards (AGREE II, RIGHT).
- Prevent bias in recommendations.
- Maintain transparency and trust among stakeholders.

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2. Required Disclosures

All contributors must submit their CoI disclosures using EHA's standardized form.

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3. CoI Collection & Evaluation

An oversight committee — consisting of the guideline group chair, an EHA office representative, and an additional non-conflicted contributor (e.g., patient representative or methodologist) — evaluates all disclosed interests by:

- Determining whether a CoI exists.
- Assessing its relevance to the guideline or specific recommendations.
- Categorizing it as **low**, **moderate**, or **high**.

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4. CoI Relevance Categories & Required Actions

Relevance	Circumstances	Management Actions
None	No conflicts identified	No action needed
Low	Occasional industry-funded lectures	No action needed
Moderate	Advisory boards, industry-funded trial roles, regular company lectures	Exclusion from voting on relevant recommendations **only** when involved with a single company or specific agent/modality
High	Industry employment, ownership interests, shareholdings	No participation in topic-related discussions or voting

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5. CoI Management Workflow

Chairs:

- Must not have direct financial or proprietary interests (patents and stocks in companies, employment in a commercial company). This applies also to family members of the individual (spouse/children, etc).
- If unavoidable, a non-conflicted co-chair is appointed.

Experts with CoIs:

- Can participate in discussions and vote on any recommendation for which their expertise is essential.
    - Their contribution must be balanced with input from non-conflicted members. Alternatively, authors involved with multiple companies may participate in discussions and voting, as long as CoIs are properly disclosed (point 6).
- Individuals with a category of high relevance CoIs cannot participate in topic-related discussions or voting.

Oversight Committee Responsibilities:

- Monitor all CoI disclosures and decisions.
- Ensure transparency and accountability throughout the process.

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6. Transparency

- Document and track all CoI disclosures and actions taken.
- Make CoI management processes publicly accessible.
- Include a CoI management statement in each guideline. Such statement should follow the structure below:
  - All the members of the guideline panel submitted a declaration of competing interests (see Declaration of competing interests' section). [None of the methodology team members reported any conflicts of interest]. Clinical experts with a category of high relevance CoI were recused from discussion and voting of recommendations. EHA oversees the guideline development process and provided funding for the project.

Conclusion

EHA's CoI management framework supports the development of trustworthy, evidence-based clinical guidelines by promoting transparency, minimizing bias, and ensuring fair decision-making.