



Referrals to the Research Integrity Editors and the Conflict of Interest (Col) Panel

Cochrane's Research Integrity Editors and the Conflict of Interest (Col) Panel provide advice on implementation of Cochrane's Col policies and arbitrate potential policy breaches.

The Research Integrity Editor and Col Panel can be contacted in the following ways:

- All queries relating to author Col for a specific Cochrane protocol, review or update should be submitted by Cochrane Groups via Editorial Manager. This is done by sending an Ad Hoc email 'ME Col referral request' through Editorial Manager. Email templates are available for both submissions and proposals. For information on how to send an Ad Hoc email through Editorial Manager, please see the [Editorial Manager Knowledge Base](#).
 - The 'ME Col referral request' email can be sent by people with the following roles in Editorial Manager: Managing Editor, Assistant Managing Editor, Editorial Assistant. On the Central Editorial Manager site only, people with the following roles also have sending permissions: Admin Support, Proposal Manager.
- For all other Col queries or concerns (including queries about funding for a Cochrane review, funding for Cochrane groups, editor Col, peer reviewer Col or general queries about the policy, or concerns about Col from readers, please email coiarbiter@cochrane.org.

Information to include in referrals

Referrals about author Col on a Cochrane title, protocol or review submitted via a 'ME Col referral request' Ad Hoc email in Editorial Manager should be submitted by registered Cochrane Groups. The template email will automatically pull in relevant information related to the protocol/review/update required by Research Integrity Editors and Col Panel and you will also be prompted to include the following information:

- Your specific question for the Research Integrity Editors (**please include as much information as possible**).
- Which Col policy applies to this protocol/review/update (Conflict of Interest Policy for Cochrane Library Content 2020 or Commercial Sponsorship Policy 2014)?
- The names of all authors who have declared relevant financial Col and confirmation that details of these are declared in the most recent version of the

Convey Declaration available in Editorial Manager.

- Confirmation that up to date DoI forms for all authors are available in Editorial Manager for this submission. If not, please explain why.
- The stage the submission has reached in Editorial Manager.

See below a list of websites/databases that can be used to identify which companies make particular pharmaceutical products. This can be used to help determine whether a financial interest is relevant to a particular review.

Websites/databases to help identify drug manufacturers

- [U.S. Food & Drug Administration's Drug Establishments Current Registration Site](#)

Search by company name to see where companies are registered.

- [Monthly Index of Medical Specialities \(MIMS\)](#)

Look up pharmaceutical companies and a list of products they manufacture.

- [The electronic medicines compendium \(emc\)](#)

Look up drugs and see who they are manufactured by in the United Kingdom.

- [Wikipedia – UK pharma companies](#)

List of pharmaceutical companies with operations in the United Kingdom. Use browser 'Find' feature to search for company names and link to Wikipedia entries that contain more information about the company and the products they sell.

- [Wikipedia – International pharma companies](#)

List of pharmaceutical companies and subsidiaries notable enough to have their own articles in Wikipedia. Use browser 'Find' feature to search for company names and link to Wikipedia entries that contain more information about the company. Some entries are very brief.

Referrals about a Cochrane Centre or Group (submitted by email to coiarbiter@cochrane.org) should include the following information:

- Full details of the group and of the funder to which this matter refers (i.e. group involved, recipient, date of payment, name of company or organization, type of organization, website and organization's financial interest in the broader topic area of the CRG). **Please include as much detail as possible.**

For all other queries (submitted by email to coiarbiter@cochrane.org), please explain your question for the Research Integrity Editors and the CoI Panel. **Please include as much detail as possible.**

Process for handling referrals

Referrals will be handled in line with the following process:

- All new referrals will be received and reviewed by the Research Integrity Editor, who may liaise with the Cochrane Group if any additional information is required. Where the query is straightforward or a policy breach clearly has/has not occurred, they will be managed by the Research Integrity Editor.
- Where the query is more complex or there is doubt about a policy breach, the case will be referred to the Senior Research Integrity Editor.
- Complex or ambiguous cases will be referred to the Col Panel Chair, who will generally refer to the full Col Panel. The decision to refer rests with the Chair.
- The Col Panel will decide on each referral after individual panel members have considered it, and then reach a consensus (either by e-mail discussion or teleconference). The final decision must have the agreement of the majority of panel members. In circumstances in which one member of the panel is unable to participate (e.g. due to a Col) the final decision must have the agreement of the majority of the remaining panel members. In cases where there is disagreement within the panel over the existence of a breach and consensus cannot be achieved, the Senior Research Integrity Editor will make the final decision.
- The Research Integrity Editors and the Col Panel members may wish to communicate with the Cochrane Review Group (CRG) staff involved in the referral directly, if this facilitates information exchange or case resolution. All decision relating to referrals about Cochrane Library Content will be made based to the Col Policy for Cochrane Library Content or Commercial Sponsorship Policy (as applicable).

Response timeframes

A response will be provided to referrals within the following timeframes:

- Referrals managed by the Research Integrity Editor - 5 working days
- Referrals escalated to the Senior Research Integrity Editor – an additional 5 working days
- Referrals escalated to the Col Panel Chair or full panel - an additional 10 working days
- The sender will be notified when a case is referred to the Col Panel.

Decisions

When the Research Integrity Editors or Col Panel have reached a decision this will be communicated directly to the person who submitted the case referral form, including a recommended course of actions for managing any policy breaches. This may include advice that a review cannot be published or must be withdrawn. The CRG and/or author team have the right to appeal any such decision.

Appeals

Appeals against decisions made by the Research Integrity Editors and the Col Panel should be made in writing within one calendar month of receiving a decision and should be submitted via coiarbiter@cochrane.org.

Appeals will be managed as follows:

- For cases initially managed by the Research Integrity Editor, the appeal and all relevant correspondence will be forwarded to the Senior Research Integrity Editor.
- For cases or appeals initially managed by the Senior Research Integrity Editor, the appeal and all relevant correspondence will be forwarded to the Col Panel.
- For cases or appeals initially managed by the Col Panel, the appeal and all relevant correspondence will be forwarded to the Editor in Chief for a final decision.

Timelines for receiving an initial response to appeals are as follows:

- For appeals reviewed by the Senior Research Integrity editor - 5 working days
- For appeals reviewed by the Col panel - 15 working days
- For appeals reviewed by the Editor in Chief - 20 working days

Case referral database

Full details of all referrals submitted via the online referral form that relate to Cochrane protocols/reviews/updates and associated discussions and deliberations will be securely stored in an online database. Access to these case reports will be limited to the Research Integrity Editors and members of Col Panel.