



Frequently Asked Questions

Conflict of Interest (2023)

This companion document is intended to provide physicians with general advice to support their understanding of the expectations set out in a College Standard of Practice.

This document may be edited or updated for clarity at any time. Please refer back to the document regularly to ensure you are aware of the most recent advice.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I am in a conflict of interest?

Consider whether a reasonable person could think that your duty to act in your patient's best interest may be affected or influenced by other competing interests. If the answer is "yes," you are in a conflict of interest.

Do I have to gain financially to be considered in a conflict of interest?

You do not need to directly profit from the relationship. If your family, close friends, corporation, or business partners profit from the arrangement, it could still be considered a conflict of interest for you. Non-financial interests can also give rise to a conflict of interest. If you receive a benefit not related to payment such as recognition of professional achievement, this may be considered a conflict of interest for you.

My child/spouse is a healthcare provider. Can I refer patients to them?

As you may be in a conflict of interest, you should only provide referrals if there are no viable alternatives, and you are able to manage the conflict as detailed in the standard of practice.

Can I accept gifts from industry?

Accepting a gift or inducement of any value can influence and undermine your independent clinical judgment. Modest inducements, such as a meal provided during a product or service

demonstration, are permissible, but inducements of larger values may be considered a conflict of interest.

What do I need to consider when distributing drug samples to patients?

Always consider the best interest of your patients. Samples can be beneficial to patients in certain circumstances, but they can also lead to the use of medications that are not your first choice or which are costlier than other medications. Consider the patient’s needs, whether the sample is your first choice of treatment, and any impact that the sample may have on the patient’s current and future costs.

Can I accept a fee in return for making a referral?

Accepting a fee or “kick back” in return for making a referral would place you in a conflict of interest. Patients must be able to trust their physicians will be transparent and make referrals based solely on their healthcare needs.

I live in a small community where it is impossible to avoid certain conflicts of interest. What should I do?

Make your patients fully aware of any conflicts of interest. If the conflict is unavoidable and the patient provides informed consent to proceed, you can continue to provide care as long as you are satisfied that you are acting in the patient’s best interest and you are not exploiting the patient for personal advantage. Always make patients aware of any circumstances where your values would influence the recommendation or practice of any medical procedure that the patient needs or wants.

I still have questions. Who can help me?

Contact the College by [email](#). We will direct your inquiry to the appropriate person at our offices.

Document History

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