



Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Policy

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Introduction

- 1.1 This policy, issued by the Australian Tactical Medical Association (ATMA), outlines the conflict of interest and confidentiality obligations that apply to all individuals involved in the full scope of ATMA business including, but not limited to, committee members, reviewers, researchers, the ATMA leadership team, ATMA employees and contractors.
- 1.2 As a non for profit association within the Australia, ATMA is required to maintain a high standard of professionalism and ethical conduct in its operations. It is essential that member and public confidence is maintained in the integrity of all ATMA business operations.
- 1.3 This policy is designed to ensure that all conflicts of interest are identified, disclosed and managed in a rigorous and transparent way that promotes public confidence in the integrity, legitimacy, impartiality and fairness of ATMA processes. Consequently, all individuals carrying out ATMA business are required to:
 - act with integrity, objectivity, openness and honesty;
 - be accountable for their decisions and actions;
 - be subject to an appropriate level of scrutiny;
 - provide assurances to ATMA that they will abide by the ATMA confidentiality requirements; and
 - disclose any conflicts of interest related to their official duties.

Conflict of Interest

2.1 Definitions

- 2.1.1 A **conflict of interest** is a situation in which someone in a position of trust has competing professional or private interests. Such competing interests could make it difficult for an individual to fulfil his/her duties impartially, and could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.
- 2.1.2 An **apparent conflict of interest** exists where it appears that an individual's other professional or private interests could improperly influence the performance of their duties and responsibilities. Individuals must be conscious that perceptions of conflict of interest may be as important as an actual conflict.
- 2.1.3 A **risk of conflict of interest** arises where an individual has a professional or private interest which is such that an actual conflict of interest may arise if they were to become involved in relevant official duties and responsibilities in the future.
- 2.1.4 In the context of this policy, **conflicts of interest** refer to all three definitions found in clauses 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

2.2 Disclosing Conflicts of Interest

- 2.2.1 Individuals must consider the risk for conflict of interest in all possible areas including:
- professional positions;
 - membership of committees of other organisations;
 - consultancies;
 - boards of directors;
 - advisory groups;
 - professional relationships;
 - family and personal relationships; or
 - financial interests, including receiving recompense in the form of cash, services or equipment from other parties to support research activities.
- 2.2.2 When undertaking ATMA business, an individual must clearly disclose any conflicts of interest which may impact their ability to perform the role for which they have been selected. A conflict of interest may also exist where an individual's partner or immediate family member has any of the interests listed in clause 2.2.1. The term 'partner' may refer to personal or business partners.
- 2.2.3 For ATMA committee members and reviewers, a conflict of interest may arise in the following situations, where an individual:
- has a contractual or employment arrangement with a university, or any organisation that is named in a current proposal, evaluation process, or other documentation relating to any ATMA business under his/her consideration;
 - owns shares in, or exercises control in a company or other organisation named in any current proposal or evaluation process that is under his/her consideration, or in which he/she has direct involvement; or
 - is involved in any other committee process where he/she may have a direct or indirect involvement in the matters being considered.
- 2.2.4 The above is not an exhaustive list. For further advice relevant to ATMA business areas, contact the ATMA secretary.
- 2.2.5 The obligation to disclose conflicts of interest is ongoing. Where required by ATMA, individuals must disclose conflicts of interest to ATMA annually. Individuals are required to update that information as soon as possible if any significant changes occur to their or their immediate family/partner's interests. Any private information disclosed to ATMA will be treated as confidential and in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles set out in the *Privacy Act 1988*.
- 2.2.6 Any individual reviewing material for ATMA must agree to a confidentiality and conflict of interest statement.
- 2.2.7 If an individual appointed to undertake ATMA business has, or acquires, an interest that could conflict with the proper performance of his or her appointed functions, they must disclose to ATMA, in writing, details of the nature of the interest and its relationship to ATMA business as soon as possible after the relevant facts come to the individual's knowledge. In cases where an individual declares a conflict of interest in relation to a matter under consideration by ATMA or one of its committees, the ATMA President or a delegate will determine the extent to which that member may be involved in discussion or decisions concerning that matter.

- 2.2.8 Conflicts of interest will be subject to regular review by ATMA; however
- 2.2.9 All members are expected to adhere to the conflict of interests and confidentiality policy, which requires all members to disclose any conflicts of interest within four weeks of the conflict being identified. Conflict of interest information will be reviewed annually and employees and contractors are responsible for disclosing any additional conflicts that may arise as soon as possible.

2.3 Evaluating and Managing Conflicts of Interest

- 2.3.1 ATMA has strict processes in place for evaluating and managing conflicts of interest. ATMA will consider the potential implications of conflicts of interest in determining the most appropriate management strategy.
- 2.3.2 In some instances, it may be necessary to remove the individual from any involvement in the matter causing the conflict and to recruit an impartial third party to oversee part or all of the processes involved in the matter. Any measures taken by ATMA will be documented.
- 2.3.3 Decision-making processes in research-related areas often require expert advice. In some cases, the available pool of experts in a field can be so limited that all available experts have an association with the matter under consideration. In such instances, judgements need to be made by ATMA which balance the benefit of having persons with expertise involved against the risks of their interests causing bias in a process.
- 2.3.4 ATMA may determine that some conflicts of interest are not so material that they could affect the individual's ability to give full and unbiased consideration to the matter at hand and should not deprive ATMA of the individual's expertise and knowledge. All conflicts of interest must still be disclosed to ATMA.
- 2.3.5 Throughout ATMA committee business, conflicts of interest will be recorded in a register and/or minutes of meetings.
- 2.3.6 Where a conflict of interest is grounds for the individual to not be privy to the information under consideration, the individual will not take part in any decision-making processes and will absent themselves from the room when the information is being discussed.
- 2.3.7 ATMA will note, record and monitor the ongoing relevance of all conflicts of interest.
- 2.3.8 ATMA committee members who fail to follow proper process in the disclosure and management of conflicts of interest may be in breach of their fiduciary duty. This could lead to termination of appointment, and may result in ATMA seeking legal redress for breach of that duty.
- 2.3.9 ATMA will maintain robust internal processes for managing conflicts of interest that may exist or arise for its employees.

Confidentiality

- 3.1 All individuals carrying out ATMA business are required to preserve the principles of confidentiality outlined in this document and agree to confidentiality obligations.
- 3.2 Information contained in application, assessment and evaluation processes is given and received in confidence. Information must be handled and treated as confidential material and must be used only for the purposes of ATMA business. In order to preserve confidentiality, individuals should not discuss ATMA business with any other party at any stage, unless specifically authorised to do so.
- 3.3 It is unethical and unlawful for individuals to use for other purposes any information, including intellectual property, contained in Proposals, evaluation material or other documentation provided to them by ATMA. To protect confidentiality, individuals must destroy all such information provided by ATMA once the purposes for which it was provided have been fulfilled.

Summary

- 1.6 When engaging with ATMA as a committee member, reviewer, researcher or employee, the individual is responsible for reading and understanding this policy and for reviewing their current activities for conflicts of interest.
- 1.7 It is also the individual's responsibility to disclose any possible conflicts of interest to ATMA, in writing, as soon as they become evident.
- 1.8 Further information can be obtained by emailing secretary@atma.net.au