



AMERICAN SPINAL INJURY ASSOCIATION
POLICY ON COMMITTEE MEMBER
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Committee service within the American Spinal Injury Association (ASIA) often requires committee members to review articles, documents, and proposals, and recommend individuals in the field of spinal cord injury for awards or recognition. The best interests of ASIA, its membership, and the field of spinal cord injury (SCI) are served when the evaluation processes are objective, unbiased, and confidential. They are further best served when committee evaluation information remains confidential permanently and committee judgments remain confidential until deliberations are completed and formally announced by authorized individuals within the organization.

The following policies identify and define potential areas that may create perceived or actual conflicts of interest and violations of confidentiality policy. These policies apply to all ASIA members providing service on an ASIA committee.

Conflicts of Interest Policy

Ethical conduct in all areas of organizational service mandates the disclosure of both real and perceived bias. Identifying bias is a foundational responsibility of committee service.

POLICY: If a committee member is assigned a task with respect to which an actual or potential conflict exists, the Committee Chair and Vice Chair should be immediately notified. The Committee Chair and Vice Chair will then determine the extent to which the committee member will be recused from review, discussion, or voting on the matter involving the conflict. Should a conflict be disclosed by the Committee Chair or Vice Chair, a third committee member shall participate in the process of determining how the conflict will be addressed.

Conflicts of interest include, but are not necessarily limited to, circumstances in which a committee member:

1. Is an author on a paper being considered for an award.
2. Has 'a close working' or personal relationship with the lead author, grant applicant, or nominee (hereafter referred to as potential awardee), or has published with these individuals in the past two years. Review articles with greater than five authors may, if so determined by the Committee Chair and/or Vice Chair following disclosure, be exempt from this requirement. A close working relationship is defined as having:
 - a) A mentor or mentee affiliation with the potential awardee.
 - b) A collaborative affiliation on a grant with potential awardee.

- c) A financial relationship with the potential awardee.
- d) Had a dispute or disagreement with potential awardee(s) to an extent that bias would be considered by a reasonable person to affect opinions and/or objective decision-making.

As the field of SCI is small, many reviewers and potential awardees may participate in research or collaborative networks. This is not necessarily considered a conflict unless the committee member works closely and directly with the potential awardee.

Confidentiality Policy

ASIA committee responsibilities typically involve review of information needed to select awardees. In the course of discharging committee responsibilities members may gain knowledge of information provided by award nominees and their reviewers, and/or may have knowledge of deliberations by the committee to select awardees.

POLICY: Nonpublic information provided to the committee and used in committee deliberations, including names of applicants or nominees, is considered permanently confidential and shall not be disclosed to committee outsiders. Names of awardees are confidential until formally announced by ASIA.

I have read and understand the ASIA Policy on Committee Member Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality and agree to abide by this policy. If asked I will accept responsibility for providing information sufficient to clarify any actual or perceived conflict of interest or any possible violation of my confidentiality obligations. If I violate this policy, I understand and accept that I may be dismissed from ASIA committee service.

Printed Name

Date

Signature