

# JERHRE NOTES

*Skills for Solving Ethical Problems in Human Research*

## Identifying and Managing Conflict of Interest

How serious is conflict of interest (COI) in academic-industry relationships (AIRs)? Who should identify and manage such COI?

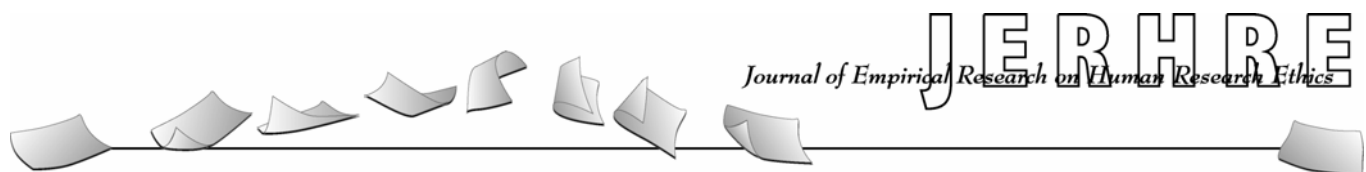
When 316 IRB chairs and 893 members at 115 institutions were surveyed:

- Most felt that AIRs were a problem for research integrity nationally, but less than half felt they are a problem at their own institution.
- Over 90% thought investigators' relationships should be disclosed to subjects, but 61% said these relationships are not always reported.
- Over 80% believed institutional relationships should be disclosed to subjects, but only 39% said this happens all the time.
- Most considered review of AIRs to be the IRB's responsibility.
- IRB members with AIRs were less likely than those without AIRs to believe that study sponsors have post-trial responsibility to subjects.

Should IRBs be burdened with reviewing financial details of AIRs? Do IRB members have the expertise to identify conflicts of interest and develop strategies for managing them? A model employed by many institutions is for a Conflict of Interest Committee to be charged with defining, identifying, and managing COI, and reporting their recommendations to the IRB which has final responsibility for protecting human subjects.

Many questions remain. For example: What constitutes COI? What threshold levels for COI reporting are adequate to protect human subjects? What strategies for COI management are effective?

Weissman, J., et al (2008). Opinions of IRB members and chairs regarding investigators' relationships with industry. *JERHRE*, 3(1), 3-14.



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