

## **IDENTIFY YOUR CASE: REVIEWER BIAS OR COMPETITIVE HARMFUL ACTS BY REVIEWERS**

Editors should avoid selecting external peer reviewers with obvious potential conflicts of interest, for example, those who work in the same department or institution as any of the authors. Authors often provide editors with the names of persons they feel should not be asked to review a manuscript because of potential conflicts of interest, usually professional. When possible, authors should be asked to explain or justify their concerns; that information is important to editors in deciding whether to honour such requests.

Reviewers must disclose to editors any conflicts of interest that could bias their opinions of the manuscript, and they should disqualify themselves from reviewing specific manuscripts if they believe it to be appropriate. As in the case of authors, silence on the part of reviewers concerning potential conflicts may mean either that such conflicts exist that they have failed to disclose, or that conflicts do not exist. Reviewers must therefore also be asked to state explicitly whether conflicts do or do not exist. Reviewers must not use knowledge of the work, before its publication, to further their own interests.

Editors who make final decisions about manuscripts must have no personal, professional, or financial involvement in any of the issues they might judge. Other members of the editorial staff, if they participate in editorial decisions, must provide editors with a current description of their financial interests (as they might relate to editorial judgments) and disqualify themselves from any decisions where they have a conflict of interest. Editorial staff must not use the information gained through working with manuscripts for private gain. Editors should publish regular disclosure statements about potential conflicts of interests related to the commitments of journal staff.

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