What to do if a reader suspects undisclosed conflict of interest (Col) in a published article

1. Reader informs editor of author’s undisclosed Col
2. Thank reader and say you plan to investigate
3. Contact author(s) and express concern
   - It may be helpful to provide a copy of the journal’s policy/definition of Col
4. Author(s) supplies relevant details
   - Thank author but point out seriousness of omission
5. Author(s) denies Col
   - Explain journal policy/Col definition clearly and obtain signed statement from author(s) about all relevant Cols (if not obtained previously)
6. Publish correction to competing interest statement as required
7. Inform reader of outcome
8. Note:
   - To avoid future problems:
     - Always get signed statement of Cols from all authors and reviewers before publication.
     - Ensure journal guidelines include clear definition of Col

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