



CANADIAN POST COVID CONDITION GUIDELINES - ASSESSMENT OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (COI)

The AWMF¹ team conducts a thorough review of Individual Disclosures (see Flowchart 1) and assesses the relevance and seriousness of COI based on the circumstances i.e., whether it pertains to direct financial matters or is of an indirect or other nature. Depending on duration and extent, COI are considered:

1. None:

In cases where no COI is identified. This means that the individual is free from any topic-relevant circumstances that may cause a risk to influence their decision. Thus, no limitations are placed on their capacity to function as a member or leader/chair of a guideline group.

2. Low:

In instances where an individual receives funding from industry sources for individual lectures related to products or medications pertinent to the guideline topic (<10,000CAD/year), the COI is assessed as 'Low' and limitations are imposed, which means a limitation of leadership functions.

- Leaders/chairs should have no COI. If the guideline group does want to keep a leader/chair with low conflicts of interests, the guideline development organization may involve the addition of a peer without COI, if applicable.
- Also, for leaders of thematic working groups, a peer without COI may be added, if applicable.

3. Moderate:

When an individual is involved as an expert in an industry-funded advisory board, holds management responsibilities for industry-funded studies, or possesses shares in individual companies (within specified limits), the COI is assessed as 'Moderate' and specific limitations are imposed in addition to the 'Low' limitations. This includes:

- No vote for topic-relevant recommendations, or
- Voting marked as with "conflict of interest", so that votes can be removed in the sense of a sensitivity analysis to see if the result is different with or without votes with COI. If results are different, results without COI will be considered. Additional measures may be implemented based on specific circumstances.

¹ Team of Association of the Scientific Medical Societies in Germany (AWMF); Institute for Medical Knowledge Management is engaged for COI assessment. Team members are guideline methodologists without topic related COI.



4. High:

In cases where individuals report ownership interests, employment in the industry, or substantial shareholdings in individual companies (> 34,000 CAD per company), the COI is assessed as 'High', specific limitations are imposed in addition to the 'Low' and 'Moderate' limitations. This includes:

- Restriction from participating in thematically relevant consultations.
- Not allowing to vote on relevant matters.

Extent of Conflict of interest	Circumstances according to Category	General Consequences
None	No topic relevant circumstances	None
Low	Individual lectures financed by Industry producing medication or products relevant to the guideline topic (optional: up to a certain limit)	Limitation of leadership function (coordination, if applicable add a peer without COI); or For chair of a topic related working group (if applicable add a peer without COI)
Moderate	Activity as expert in an industry-financed advisory board Management responsibility of Industry-funded study/studies Shareholding of individual companies (optional: from a certain limit on/up to a certain limit)	No vote for topic relevant recommendations; or Double voting
High	Ownership interest Employment in industry	No participation in topic relevant consultations and non-voting.

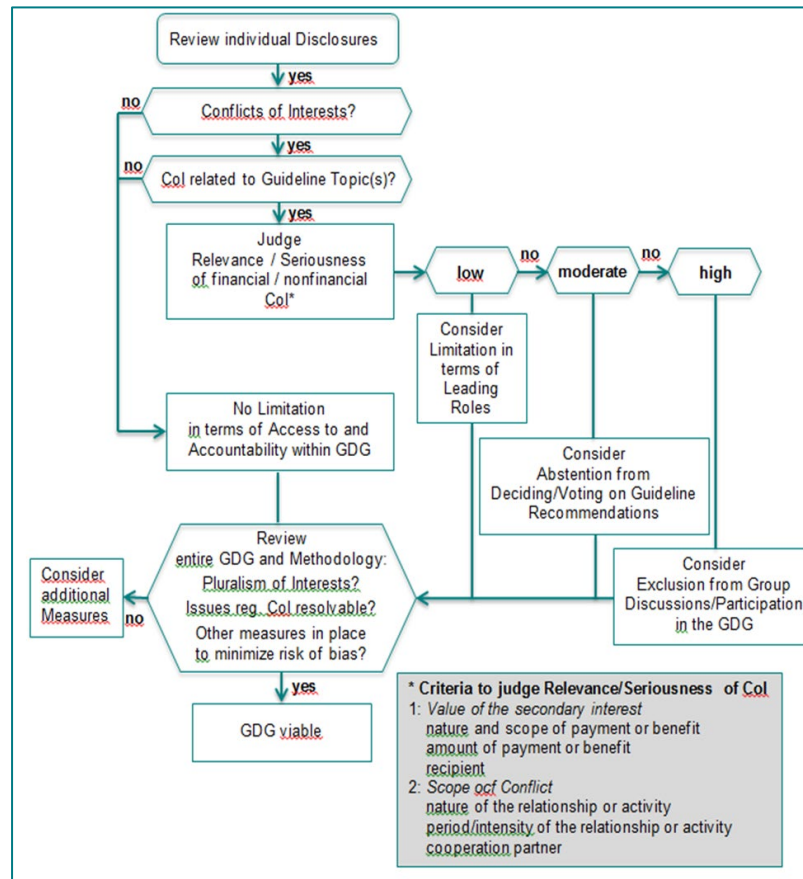


High shareholding of individuals

Companies (from a certain limit on)

Following the assessment of individual COI, AWMF reviews the entire guideline group. Should a review of the entire group reveal a pluralism of interests, along with COI resolvable issues or other measures to minimize the risk of bias, the group is deemed viable. However, if, upon review of the entire group, no pluralism of interests, COI resolvable issues, or other measures to reduce the risk of bias are found, we then consider implementing additional measures.

Flowchart 1:





**AWMF has adapted the flowchart and rules of COI management outlined in the original GIN COI paper, resulting in 3 categories of COI low, moderate, high*

MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST – Principles of Guidelines International Network

Extract of: Schünemann HJ, Al-Ansary LA, Forland F, Kersten S, Komulainen J, Kopp IB, Macbeth F, Phillips SM, Robbins C, van der Wees P, Qaseem A; Board of Trustees of the Guidelines International Network. Guidelines International Network: Principles for Disclosure of Interests and Management of Conflicts in Guidelines. *Ann Intern Med.* 2015 Oct 6;163(7):548-53. doi: 10.7326/M14-1885. PMID: 26436619.

1. Guideline developers should make all possible efforts to not include members with direct financial or relevant indirect COIs.
2. The definition of COI and its management applies to all members of a Guideline Development Group...and this should be determined before a panel [= GDG] is constituted.
3. A GDG should use standardized forms for disclosure of interests.
4. A GDG should disclose interests publicly, including all direct financial and indirect COI.
5. All members of a GDG should declare and update any changes in interests at each meeting of the group and at regular intervals.
6. Chairs of GDGs should have no direct financial or relevant indirect COI.
7. When COIs of a chair are not avoidable, a co-chair with no COIs should be appointed.
8. Experts with relevant COI and specific knowledge or expertise may be permitted to participate in discussion of individual topics, but there should be an appropriate balance of opinion.
9. No member of the GDG deciding about the direction or strength of a recommendation should have a direct financial COI.
10. An oversight committee should be responsible for developing and implementing rules related to COI.