



FEBRUARY 2026

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) – Conflict of Interest



Dr. Betty is a senior researcher at a government research institute studying the effectiveness of air purification technologies in the market, including a proprietary technology by CleanAir Solutions company.



She has also been invited to serve on an expert panel that will evaluate and recommend which air purification systems the government should purchase for public buildings.



Unknown to her research institution and the panel organisers, Dr. Betty's spouse is a senior executive at CleanAir Solutions, one of the companies bidding for the purchasing contract.



Dr. Betty's own research has shown promising results for CleanAir's technology, but she hasn't disclosed her family connection.

Breaking it down, what is the conflict here?

1. Dr Betty's spouse's company (CleanAir Solutions) is bidding for a government purchase where Dr. Betty is in the evaluation panel. **Her personal relationship creates a financial conflict of interest.**
2. Dr Betty's research involves studying CleanAir's technology and producing research data and results based on it. Her research findings, while legitimate, could be perceived as **biased** due to her family connection. **Failing to disclose could compromise research integrity.**

Responsible Actions Dr. Betty Should Take

Dr Betty should follow her institution's policy for the management of conflict of interest, which may include:

1. Full disclosure - Immediately declare to panel organisers and the IRB about spouse's role at CleanAir Solutions
2. Remove herself from the evaluation
3. Ensure written record of disclosure and recusal decisions
4. Continue providing technical expertise on other aspects of the evaluation process
5. Ensure independent review of research findings to prevent bias in judgment that would influence the choice of research design, statistical analysis, interpretation, and reporting of the data.
6. Provide research data transparently, with conflict disclosure attached



Summary

Research conflicts of interest extend beyond financial considerations to relationships, authority, and influence that can compromise research integrity. Having conflicts isn't unethical - failing to identify, disclose, and manage them properly is what threatens public trust and research standards.

Quick Self-Check Questions:

- ? Do I have any personal, financial, or professional relationships that could influence my judgment?
- ? Have I disclosed all relevant conflicts to appropriate parties?
- ? Am I taking adequate steps to manage identified conflicts?

Reference: NHG Health Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Manual (Version 1.1) Chapter 4: Conflict of Interests & Commitment
Additional Readings: NHG Health Investigator's Manual Chapter 3.5: Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) and 3.6: Institutional Conflict of Interest (ICOI).

Article Contributed and Edited By: Jaclyn Ong Yuen Yeng, Manager (IMH)
Proudly brought to you by: Clinical Research Coordinator Society (CRCS)

*Disclaimer: All characters appearing in this article are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons is purely coincidental.
Best practices may differ between institutions. Readers are encouraged to follow their institution's policies/ guidelines relating to the above scenarios/case study.