

Institutional Conflict of Interest Policies at U.S. Academic Research Institutions

David B. Resnik, JD, PhD, J.L. Ariansen, MS, Jaweria Jamal, and Grace E. Kissling, PhD

Abstract

Purpose

Institutional conflicts of interest (ICOIs) occur when the institution or leaders with authority to act on behalf of the institution have conflicts of interest (COIs) that may threaten the objectivity, integrity, or trustworthiness of research because they could impact institutional decision making. The purpose of this study was to gather and analyze information about the ICOI policies of the top 100 U.S. academic research institutions, ranked according to total research funding.

Method

From May–June 2014, the authors attempted to obtain ICOI policy information for the top 100 U.S. academic research institutions from publicly available Web sites or via e-mail inquiry. If an ICOI policy was not found, the institutions' online COI policies were examined. Data on each institution's total research funding, national funding rank, public versus private status, and involvement in clinical research were collected. The authors developed a coding system for categorizing the ICOI policies and used it to code the policies for nine items. Inter rater agreement and *P* values were assessed.

Results

Only 28/100 (28.0%) institutions had an ICOI policy. ICOI policies varied among the 28 institutions. Having an ICOI policy was positively associated with total research funding and national funding ranking but not with public versus private status or involvement in clinical research.

Conclusions

Although most U.S. medical schools have policies that address ICOIs, most of the top academic research institutions do not. Federal regulation and guidance may be necessary to encourage institutions to adopt ICOI policies and establish a standard form of ICOI review.