

Conflict of Interest, Research, Education and Industry Interaction: Standards for Nurse Practitioners

(Not in effect until approved)

Purpose

This standard ensures that nurse practitioners (NPs) effectively manage **conflicts of interest** in all aspects of their practice, including patient care, research, education and interactions with **industry**. NPs must disclose potential conflicts transparently, prioritize patient well-being and avoid personal gain influencing clinical decisions. By maintaining professional autonomy, adhering to ethical research practices and ensuring transparency in industry relationships, NPs uphold the integrity of their clinical judgment and safeguard patient trust.

Criteria

To meet this standard, NPs must

1. Identify and manage conflicts of interest in the best interest of the patient.
2. Not accept or offer **compensatory incentives** that could influence clinical decisions.
3. Ensure that accepting minor tokens such as food, meals or low-value promotional materials like notepads and pens, does not influence clinical decisions or patient care.
4. Inform patients of personal interests in recommended facilities or services, emphasizing the patient's right to choose alternatives.
5. Prioritize the patient's best interests and avoid allowing personal gain to influence professional decisions.
6. Taking appropriate steps when a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, including:
 - 6.1. Clearly, fully and timely disclosure of the conflict of interest to the patient.
 - 6.2. Obtaining and documenting the patient's informed consent before providing treatment or advice.
 - 6.3. Ensuring the patient is not exploited for personal gain.
7. Manage conflicts of interest when participating in research by:

- 7.1.** Recognizing that accepting compensation for research activities can create conflicts of interest.
 - 7.2.** Ensuring grants, promotions and publishing opportunities associated with research do not influence patient care.
 - 7.3.** Accepting fair compensation only for time, lost income or expenses related to the study.
 - 7.4.** Participating only in research that has been reviewed and approved by a recognized research ethics board.
 - 7.5.** Informing patients if the NP receives compensation for the patient's participation.
 - 7.6.** Obtaining and documenting full, informed, competent and voluntary consent before enrolling patients in research.
 - 7.7.** Protecting patient privacy in compliance with relevant laws.
 - 7.8.** Avoiding agreements that limit the publication or disclosure of adverse events that occur during the study.
 - 8.** Manage conflicts of interest in education activities (including continuing education) by:
 - 8.1.** Avoiding endorsements or actions that could lead to personal gain.
 - 8.2.** Ensuring all educational materials and teachings are scientifically valid and objective.
 - 8.3.** Public disclosure of any compensatory incentives.
 - 8.4.** Ensure that learner curriculum and clinical training are not influenced by interactions between NPs and industry.
 - 8.5.** Decline reimbursement or honoraria that could be perceived as unduly influential.
 - 9.** Manage conflicts of interest in interactions with industry by:
 - 9.1.** Avoiding relationships with industry that could compromise their duty to patients.
 - 9.2.** Prioritize patient care and resolve any conflict of interest in favor of the patient.
 - 9.3.** Maintain professional autonomy and independence in all interactions with industry.
 - 9.4.** Disclosing any industry relationships that could be perceived as influencing clinical judgment.
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- 9.5.** Declining personal gifts from industry, NPs may accept teaching aids.
- 9.6.** Public disclosure of any industry funding when publishing research or other media content.
- 10.** Rely on clinical evidence when using medication samples or devices, document their use and ensure no personal gain is tied to the choice of product.

Glossary

COMPENSATORY INCENTIVES – Any form of compensation, such as commissions, rebates, fees, gifts or other incentives, that could influence clinical decision making.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST – When an NP’s professional judgment could be influenced by personal gain or competing interests. Conflict of interests can be:

Real Conflict of Interest: The NP’s actions directly benefit their own interests or those of a personal or affiliated connection.

Potential Conflict of Interest: A situation where an NP’s actions could lead to personal gain or benefit.

Perceived Conflict of Interest: A situation in which an informed person might reasonably believe a conflict of interest exists, even if none does.

INDUSTRY – Any manufacturer or distributor of health-care products or services, including pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, aesthetic products and medical devices.

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