

American College of Rheumatology Conflict of Interest Principles for Board of Directors, Committees, Subcommittees, Task Forces, and Special Projects

The American College of Rheumatology (ACR) is a not for profit, independent organization for rheumatology professionals. The ACR depends on a diverse group of volunteers to further its mission, and welcomes and encourages members to volunteer. In order to effectively further its mission, maintain its integrity and reputation in the medical community and with the public, all actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest must be addressed and managed.

Management of Conflicts of Interests

Volunteers who serve on the ACR Board of Directors, Committees, Subcommittees, Task Forces and Special Projects have certain obligations they must fulfill to insure that a conflict of interest does not adversely affect the interests of the ACR:

Disclosure

Volunteers who serve on the ACR Board of Directors, Committees, Subcommittees, Task Forces and Special Projects must provide disclosures at the time of their nomination and at least yearly. The purpose of the Disclosure Policy is to identify relationships that may pose actual, potential and perceived conflicts. These conflicts can then be evaluated and managed by the ACR. This policy is based on the principle that, in many cases, full disclosure of the actual or potential conflict will of itself suffice. Any personal interest or affiliation with another organization should be disclosed, e.g. employment or consulting arrangements, and memberships on boards or councils.

Obligations of the Volunteer

Volunteers who serve on the ACR Board of Directors, Committees, Subcommittees, Task Forces and Special Projects must act in the best interest of the ACR. A volunteer's personal interest or affiliation with another organization must not prevent the volunteer from fairly evaluating issues. If the volunteer's interest(s) will cause the volunteer to take action or try to influence other volunteers to take action that would benefit the volunteer, or another organization with which the volunteer is affiliated, the volunteer's participation should be limited. Specifically, the volunteer should excuse him or herself from the discussion and/or vote. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for the volunteer to resign from either his or her ACR position or the other organization with which he or she is affiliated.

Examples of Conflict of Interest

The following are examples of possible affiliations which may raise conflict of interest concerns, and recommendations for resolution of such conflicts. In some situations, limitations on a volunteer's affiliation with other organizations or participation as an ACR volunteer may be appropriate.

The recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- Affiliations with rheumatology organizations with competing interests should be managed.
- Affiliations with organizations with conflicting goals should be managed.

- Affiliations with organizations that have financial interests or competing business activities raise concerns and should be managed.

Procedures

In order to adhere to the Conflict of Interest Principles and address actual, potential or perceived conflicts, the following procedures are adopted:

- The Conflict of Interest Principles and Volunteer Eligibility documents will be distributed to all candidates seeking appointment to the ACR Board of Directors, Committees, Subcommittees, Task Forces and Special Projects.
- ACR Members applying to volunteer must complete a disclosure form as part of the nominations process. Completed disclosure forms will be reviewed to determine if there are actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.
- The Conflict of Interest Principles and Volunteer Eligibility documents will be distributed annually to each volunteer.
- All volunteers must complete an annual disclosure form and sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the ACR Annual Meeting or prior to their first volunteer activity, whichever is sooner.
- If a volunteer becomes affiliated with another organization, or ceases an affiliation, the volunteer must promptly notify the ACR.
- Prior to each committee meeting, Committee Chairs and Staff Liaisons will review all disclosures to identify any conflicts of interest based on the meeting agenda.
- Prior to each Board of Directors meeting, Legal Counsel will review all disclosures to identify any conflicts of interest based on the meeting agenda.
- Any volunteer may raise a question about a possible conflict of interest of another volunteer at any time.
- The Committee Chairs and Staff Liaisons are responsible for being aware of and managing conflicts. The Committee Chair and the Staff Liaison will recommend any necessary action to resolve a conflict of interest. The Chair and Staff Liaison may discuss their recommendations with the affected volunteer and/or the Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest as appropriate.
- If the Committee Chairs and Staff Liaisons have questions or concerns about an actual or potential conflict of interest, they will address such questions or concerns with the ACR Director of Administration, Governance & Membership. If needed, the ACR Director of Administration, Governance & Membership will discuss with the Executive Vice President and/or Chair of the Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest.