POSITION STATEMENT ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

INTRODUCTION

The International Society of Plastic and Aesthetic Nurses (ISPAN) believes that a conflict of interest policy is necessary to facilitate collaboration, safeguard professional integrity, and establish public acceptability and trust between plastic and aesthetic registered nurses (RNs) and their patients, professional organizations, employers, and the general public.

A conflict of interest is defined as a set of circumstances that puts professional judgment at risk when a primary interest unduly influences a secondary interest (Grundy, 2016; Institute of Medicine Committee on Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education, and Practice, 2009). A conflict of interest exists when a reasonable person could perceive that a situation may have the ability to exert financial or some other type of influence (e.g., professional advancement) over the plastic or aesthetic nurse or other health care professional (Fineberg, 2017).

According to the Institute of Medicine Committee on Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education, and Practice (2009), conflict of interest is comprised of three main elements. Primary interest is the need to promote and protect the integrity of research, the welfare of patients or research participants, and the quality of medical education. Secondary interest includes the perceived or actual financial gain, professional advancement, recognition for personal achievement, or provision of favors to friends and family or students and colleagues. The third key element is the conflict itself. Conflicts can arise from a set of circumstances or relationships increasing the risk that primary interests will be neglected as a result of the pursuit of secondary interests. A conflict of interest exists whether or not a particular individual or institution is actually influenced by the secondary interest.

Conflicts of obligation involve conflict between what institutions view as their employees’ primary responsibilities to the institution and the employees’ outside commitments (Institute of Medicine Committee on Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education, and Practice, 2009).

RATIONALE
Having a policy requiring disclosure of conflicts of interest is consistent with the mission of ISSPAN. “Organizations operate best in a climate of trust, openness, and objective decision-making, believing that all members are putting the interests of the organization and its constituents first” (American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2017, para 3). Recognizing a potential conflict and managing it are essential to achieving an unbiased outcome in an organization. According to the Mayo Clinic, “conflicts of interest are inevitable and can be managed effectively in a majority of cases or eliminated when necessary” (2016, p. 4). Disclosure is the first step toward successfully managing a conflict of interest and it is better to provide more disclosure than less (Mayo Clinic, 2016; Fineberg, 2017).

Every individual can be influenced by relationships that color opinions, behavior and participation in decision-making (American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2017). The aim of a conflict of interest policy is to expose any sources of influences that may constitute a potential conflict of interest and reduce the likelihood for the potential conflict to intrude into the plastic or aesthetic nurse’s judgment (Fineberg, 2017). A failure to acknowledge and respond to a conflict of interest can erode the public trust that undergirds the value of professional judgment and expertise (Fineberg, 2017, p. 1717).

**ISSPAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

Plastic and aesthetic RNs should be aware of “conscious and unconscious biases affecting their judgment and the limitations of information resources” (Stead, 2017, p. 1716).

Health care organizations where plastic surgery and aesthetic procedures are performed should develop and adhere to conflict of interest policies.

A conflict of interest policy should include the

- requirement for disclosure of potential conflicts of interest,
- prohibition of certain relationships that may be perceived as conflicts of interest, and
- management of identified potential conflicts of interest.

**REFERENCES**


DISCLAIMER

These clinical practice guidelines and/or recommendations and/or other guidance published herein are provided by the International Society of Plastic and Aesthetic Nurses to assist practitioners in clinical decision-making. The information should not be relied upon as being complete and should not be considered inclusive of all proper treatments, methods of care, or as a statement of the standard of care. All guidelines and recommendations require periodic revision to ensure that clinicians utilize appropriate procedures, and that the materials encompass the recent critical review of literature and expert opinion. The reader must realize that clinical judgment may justify a course of action outside of the recommendations contained herein.

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