



Letters

More on *JAMA*'s policy on industry sponsored studies

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EDITOR—Fontanarosa and DeAngelis refer to “numerous errors and misconceptions” in our editorial,¹ but they mention only two, one of which was attributable to editing by the *BMJ*.^{2 3} The other was our presumption that under *JAMA*'s new policy, authors from industry must hire an academic statistician before submitting a paper. Fontanarosa and DeAngelis claim that the *JAMA* policy actually allows submissions from industry without an academic statistician. *JAMA*, however, will simply refuse to accept them until the authors purchase an academic statistical review.

If a *JAMA* paper must have an academic statistical author to be acceptable, we assumed that investigators from the private sector would not submit a paper to *JAMA* without such an author. Why would *JAMA* review such submissions if they are unacceptable a priori? Does this stance imply that the academic review is cursory, and that the academic statistician would not join the original investigators as an author? Or is *JAMA* suggesting that investigators from industry should submit papers with an incomplete list of authors, and then add another author during the review process?

Fontanarosa and DeAngelis describe our criticism of their policies as “blatant and unbalanced” and they take umbrage “that a journal like the *BMJ* would criticise another journal's policy on such a pressing issue without properly vetting the material for accuracy.” We sent *JAMA* a draft of our essay; they did not respond. Furthermore, should not journal editors welcome criticism of their own work as warmly as they encourage critical appraisal of the articles they publish, even if the forum is outside of their control? Indeed, previous *JAMA* editors published criticism of editorial policies at other journals.⁴

Citing examples of industry malfeasance, of which we agree there are many, does little to justify an inequitable policy. In which examples was the malfeasance the responsibility of the industry statistician? Which would have been prevented by having the analysis reviewed by an academic statistician? As Senn noted,⁵ “independent” academic authors have their own biases, and they do not usually have to undergo the intense scrutiny of regulatory authorities.

Footnotes

- Competing interests KJR is an employee of RTI Health Solutions, an independent non-profit research organisation that does work for government agencies and pharmaceutical companies. SE has no competing interests to declare.

✦The editorial's title was changed inhouse after the return of the proofs. Unfortunately, the correction was not highlighted in the letter from *JAMA*'s editors, although both were published in the same issue (21 January).

References

- 1.Fontanarosa PB, DeAngelis CD. JAMA's policy on industry sponsored studies. *BMJ* 2006; **332**: 177. (21 January.)
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- 4.Rothman KJ. Conflict of interest—the new McCarthyism in science. *JAMA* (1993);**269**: 2782–4.
- 5.Senn SJ. JAMA's policy does not go far enough. *BMJ* 2006; **332**: 305. (4 February.)