

Disclosure and Publication Bias

Scientific Approaches to
Strengthening Research Integrity in
Nutrition and Energetics

Against disclosure

- David Allison argues that **disclosing financial conflicts of interests may not “shield against bias”** (*Science* 2009, 326: 522).
- “Judging the credibility of scientific conclusions based on characteristics of the scientists offering them is antithetical to the essence of science, which should rely on data and deductive reasoning alone” (522).

For disclosure

- K. Brad Wray argues that studies suggest that **in pharmaceutical research “the sponsor’s drug invariably does better”** (Brown 2008 cited in *Science* 2010, 327: 144).
- Hence, researchers ought to report who funds their research.

Why disclose?: Moral Considerations

- It is in the **experimental subject's interests** to have information about who funds the research.
- S/he is then in a better position to judge the risks involved in participating in a study.

But ...

- Subjects misunderstand disclosure.
- They also misunderstand the subject/patient distinction.
- And studies suggest they are poor at retaining information, which undermines their ability to give informed consent.

Why disclose?: Epistemic Considerations

- In order for **researchers** to assess the research results of others, it is essential to know who funded the research.
- Disclosure will help us develop a better understanding of how financing affects our pursuit of knowledge.

Summary

- Disclosure and a study of the effects of research financing may lead to better science in the long run.
- But disclosure creates “noise” in the system.
- Perhaps protocols concerning informed consent should include telling subjects how poor they are at listening, understanding, and giving genuine informed consent.

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