

PHILOSOPHY

# CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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Obviously this has been a problem in the past as nearly all journals now require to sign a conflicts of interest form. Of course I always have conflicts of interest and hesitate what should I report in these forms – that I want to get rich? Or that I want to be famous? Having a pathological interest of self-portrayal? At least the good thing of these conflicts of interest statements is that I finally know how much I can ask for when being invited for a lecture ;-). It seems that some people are even eager to disclose their financial involvement (e-bay-like).

On the other hand, what worries me more that the conflicts of interest statements are getting routine now and are rather worthless if not done very carefully. For example let's have a look on two recent nature genetics papers: A paper accepted on [6 Jan 2006](#) on ichthyosis: "The authors declare that they have no competing financial interest". Same gene, now atopic dermatitis, accepted on [24 Feb 2006](#) "The authors declare that they have no competing financial interest". Same gene, again atopic dermatitis, other population, accepted on [11 May 2006](#): "A. Irvine has patent shares related with the filaggrin gene. The rest of the authors have declared that they have no conflicts of interest". Again same gene, ichthyosis and atopic dermatitis, accepted on [23 May 2006](#): "W.H. Irwin McLean and Frances J. D. Smith have filed patents related to genetic testing for filaggrin and therapy systems aimed at this gene." Alan D. Irvine and W.H. Irwin McLean are listed as authors on all 4 papers. So, ADI and WHIM may have decided to file a patent following their two nature genetics paper (which would not be possible in Germany, but is probably possible in the UK). BUT – why is the declaration of WHIM missing on the 11 May paper? Why is the ADI declaration missing on the 23 May paper?

Conflicts of interests: I have never met these authors before and I have no commercial interest in that topic, yea, yea.