

Letter to the Editor

J Vet Intern Med 2016;30:9
10.1111/jvim.13790

Dear Editor
As authors and readers alike, we appreciate the important discussion on disclosure and transparency that followed our recent publication in *JVIM*. We especially appreciate the chance to respond within a considerate environment, like a letter to the editor. Briefly, we believe that issues of perceived bias should be addressed by full disclosure and transparency.

With regard to Dr Moore's letter, his main stated concern was the fact that two of the five pages of the published version of our article were devoted to a single product. We believe that this was appropriate for several reasons: (1) the stated intent of the review was to highlight novel formulations suitable for use in the dog; (2) in judging how content is allocated to different parts of a review, beyond simple page numbers, it is perhaps more reasonable and fair to consider the evidence related to a specific subject. Based on the fact that references of the highest levels of evidence were related to one product (Paccal), including a multi-center randomized placebo-controlled blinded study, we believe that the number of pages allocated to Paccal was justifiable and not a reflection of bias; and (3) throughout the review process, considerable interest was expressed by the reviewers to more directly summarize information from these noteworthy high evidence references rather than simply referring readers to the references. We agreed to these requests of the reviewers and this added to the content of the Paccal section. In retrospect, we stand by and agree with the recommendations generated by this independent peer review. Accordingly, we disagree with the suggestion that Paccal was unduly emphasized.

As investigated and cited by Dr Moore, the author disclosures for this manuscript included the following: Dr Vail was a paid consultant of Abbott and Oasmia at the time of manuscript preparation and disclosure, and accordingly he made the appropriate disclosure of both of these relationships; Dr Khanna was a paid consultant of Abbott at the time of manuscript preparation and disclosure, and accordingly made the appropriate disclosure of that relationship; Dr Khanna was not a consultant of Oasmia during manuscript preparation or at the time of disclosure; Dr Khanna had a past relationship with Oasmia and that relationship was disclosed at the time it was active during earlier publications and presentations related to Paccal; Dr Rosenberg

was a consultant of Abbott and Abaxis during manuscript preparation and at the time of disclosure; Dr Rosenberg did not disclose this relationship at the time, but her oversight was not intentional and was made with an understanding of Dr Khanna's and Dr Vail's relationship with Abbott and Oasmia, which was disclosed. Collectively, we as authors believe that we acted in good faith to represent actual and perceived sources of bias in a manner that is reasonable and consistent with the policy of the Journal.

Readers should understand the rationale for making a disclosure. In the example in point, the reader should understand that the author has made a disclosure of an actual or perceived bias that includes Abbott. It is not merely to provide information but to alert the reader of a source of actual or perceived bias. It is therefore the responsibility of the reader to review the manuscript with the knowledge that a commercial party is involved and that the author is disclosing a relationship with that commercial party. That a relationship exists is critically important to the reader in order to understand that the nature of the relationships is of secondary importance. In the case in point, the relationship between Abbott, Oasmia, Zoetis and Paccal is a publically available information, and based on the disclosure of a relationship between an author and Abbott, it should be pursued as a reader responsibility.

As the Journal considers all elements of its policy on conflict of interest, it should do so using a collective and integrated approach that reflects on the basic tenet of the value and remedy provided by transparency and disclosure, and that clarifies expectations of authors, the Journal and the reader. This is a distinct approach from creating rules and enforcement that are complex and progressively difficult to manage and enforce.

Chand Khanna, DVM, PhD, DACVIM
(Oncology)

The Oncology Service, Washington, DC

David Vail, DVM, DACVIM (Oncology)

*School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison,
Madison, WI*

Mona Rosenberg, DVM, DACVIM (Oncology)

Veterinary Cancer Group of Orange County, Tustin, CA