What to do if a reader suspects undisclosed conflict of interest (Col) in a published article

Thank reader and say you plan to investigate

Contact author(s) and express concern

Author(s) supplies relevant details

Thank author but point out seriousness of omission

Author(s) denies Col

Explain journal policy/Col definition clearly and obtain signed statement from author(s) about all relevant Cols (if not obtained previously)

Publish correction to competing interest statement as required

Inform reader of outcome

Notes:
To avoid future problems:
Always get signed statement of Cols from all authors and reviewers before publication.
Ensure journal guidelines include clear definition of Col

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