

# Financial disclosure lacking in publication of clinical trials

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A substantial proportion of pharmaceutical industry payments to authors of oncology clinical trials published in major scientific journals are not disclosed, new research shows. The publications focused on clinical trials that tested new cancer drugs.

The new findings will be published as a research letter in the [journal JAMA Oncology](#).

Authors of the research letter examined the federal Open Payments Database to determine payments to oncologists who authored studies in high-impact journals. They then cross-checked the information to determine whether the authors properly disclosed the funding when the results of their clinical [trials](#) were published in [scientific journals](#). Depending on the journal, almost half of total funding was not disclosed.

"It's the honor system," said co-author Erick Turner, M.D., associate professor of psychiatry in the OHSU School of Medicine and senior scholar with the Center for Ethics in Health Care at OHSU in Portland, Oregon. "The journals ask the authors to make these disclosures, but there's no legal force behind it."

Previous studies have investigated funding disclosures among the authors of clinical practice guidelines. However, this is the first study to examine financial conflict of interest in the publication of clinical trials that underpin FDA approval of new [oncology drugs](#).

Payments from pharmaceutical companies have been shown to change physician prescribing practices, researchers noted.

"We know that pharmaceutical companies sponsor trials of their own drugs. That's not a surprise," said lead author Cole Wayant, D.O., Ph.D., researcher at Oklahoma State University. "But what is a surprise, and what warrants concern, is that this funding is often not disclosed in the publication of clinical trials that form the basis of FDA approvals and [clinical practice guidelines](#)."

The researchers identified 344 oncologist-authors of clinical trials associated with [oncology](#) drugs approved between Jan. 1, 2016, and Aug. 31, 2017. Cumulatively, the 344 oncologist authors received a total of \$216 million in four categories of payments: Speaking fees and other general payments; research for study coordination; research grants, and ownership through stock payments.

The authors then compared disclosure of financial conflict of interest in clinical trials published in six high-impact scientific journals: *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet*, *The Lancet Oncology*, *The Lancet Haematology*, the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, and *JAMA Oncology*. Almost a third of the oncologist-authors (a total of 110) did not fully disclose payments, the study found.

"In [clinical trials](#) of FDA-approved oncology drugs, bias, either real or potential, is more concerning because these oncology drugs are often associated with marginal improvement in survival but exorbitant costs," the authors wrote.

**More information:** *JAMA Oncology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1001/jamaoncol.2018.3738](#)

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