

eCOI Systems for Managing Conflicts of Interest

By Norman M. Goldfarb

Conflicts of interest (COIs) are a growing area of concern in clinical research. Financial COIs, in particular, regularly generate headlines in the media that reflect poorly on the clinical research enterprise, with significant negative repercussions for the people and institutions involved. Tracking and managing COIs is a major challenge, especially for larger institutions, given the sensitive nature of the information, variety of financial relationships, disagreements on what constitutes COIs, and widespread ignorance or disregard of the rules.

A number of software companies with systems for administering human subjects protection programs have now expanded their product portfolios to include COI modules. By leveraging the mature infrastructure of the systems, these new modules can offer robust functionality within an integrated system.

Typical features include tools to:

- Manage COI committees (agendas, minutes, approval letters)
- Configure workflow
- Configure threshold rules
- Email reminders of annual disclosure due date
- Enter disclosures at any time
- Copy information from one disclosure to the next
- Attach documents to a disclosure
- Alert administrators of potential conflicts
- Compare current version of a COI submission with a previously submitted version
- Track status of reviews
- Integrate with external source of personnel information
- Limit access for support personnel
- Generate financial disclosure statements for clinical research sponsors

The following companies offer COI modules:

- Click Commerce
- HCCS
- iMedRIS
- IRBNet
- Key Solutions
- Third Sky

Profiles of these companies and their COI products are at http://www.firstclinical.com/journal/2010/1002_eCOI.xls.

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