

13 August 2018

Dear Mr.Fergus Macbeth,
Dear Ms.Angela Webster,
Funding Arbiter, Cochrane

I am Masumi Minaguchi, Secretary General of Medwatcher Japan, an NGO launched in 1997.

I am contacting you because we released “Critical Opinion on Cochrane Review of HPV Vaccines (please see attached file; English translation of the original Japanese document)” on our website on June 7th, 2018 and would like to raise some questions on the authors’ conflict of interest of the recently published Cochrane review “Prophylactic vaccination against human papillomaviruses to prevent cervical cancer and its precursors”.

Three of four authors, Arbyn M, Simoens C and Martin-Hirsch PPL, had direct conflicts of interest, having received travel grants from HPV vaccine manufacturers. This Cochrane review’s Declaration of Interest includes the following text:

Authors of this review were assessed by the Cochrane Funding Arbiter Committee after Cochrane received correspondence and feedback on the published protocol. Current authors were approved by this committee based on stringent Cochrane conflict of interest guidelines.

The Cochrane conflict of interest guidelines states ‘Authorship and Contributorship’ as follows:

<Other financial support for author(s) from commercial sponsors or sources>

Scenario: 50% or more of the author(s) have ties to commercial sponsors or sources other than being paid directly (e.g. consultancy, grants, fees, fellowships, support for sabbaticals, travel bursary, etc.)

Action: Author with this type of conflict cannot be lead author. If not lead author and there are a majority of non-conflicted authors, review can proceed. If half or more of the authors have a conflict, review cannot proceed or should be referred to Funding Arbiter.

In light of the above mentioned criteria, we believe that a COI might exist with these Cochrane review authors.

Could you let us know the outline of the discussion in the Cochrane Funding Arbiter Committee?

We are looking forward to hearing your response to this apparent COI.

We ask for your understanding in advance; your response will be opened to the public.

Sincerely yours,

Masumi Minaguchi, Secretary General

YAKUGAI Ombudsperson "Medwatcher Japan"