

Every person has interests. Every organization has a mission. This is as it should be.
Some people are driven by money others by altruism.
Some groups are spiritual others are not.
Interests can include financial, emotional, social, or legal outcomes.
Interests can be evidenced by needs for space, publications, security, fame or fortune.
An absence of interest can be cause for concern. An investigator without an interest in the study outcome has little investment in the process.

Interests have a habit of coming into conflict, as do missions. Conflicts make life interesting.
I want to work late to finish a document - I want to go home
I want to be svelte - I want chocolate
The hospital mission is to treat patients - The hospital must break even to operate.
The company must satisfy shareholders - The sponsor needs time to do good research.

Conflicts of interest must be evaluated.
Interests cannot be avoided - they must be identified and examined.
Conflicts cannot be avoided - they must be examined and minimized.
Once conflicts of interests are identified, they may be evaluated, eliminated, or managed.

Interests that override other interests can cause harm to the outcome or to the subjects.
A person with a large interest in a positive outcome may bias a study.
A business-person charged with maximizing return on investment should not dominate over a scientist charged with adherence to good research. Or vice versa.

THE GOAL - EQUIPOISE OF INTERESTS

Interests that balance out are likely to cause little harm. Balance can be achieved through recognition, examination, evaluation and management.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND IRC REVIEW

Our application forms have multiple questions regarding financial reward. These are aimed at identifying issues. Many non-financial interests are difficult to identify although we attempt to do so with other questions.

SOURCES OF INTEREST LEADING TO BIAS OR POSSIBLE HARM

Strong beliefs or allegiance → bias observations.
Completion bonuses → undue influence put on a subject to complete despite misgivings.
Bonuses for rapid enrollment → Eligibility requirements may be tenuously met.
Promise of shares → interest in a positive outcome and rapid FDA approval.
Need for laboratory space → disapproval of a competitor's study
Desire for fame → taking on too many studies.

