



College of Respiratory  
Therapists of Ontario

Ordre des thérapeutes  
respiratoires de l'Ontario

# CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Practice FAQs

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Although it is often difficult to determine if a conflict of interest exists, it can be helpful if you ask yourself two questions:

1. Does the situation influence, or could it potentially influence, how I treat this particular patient? (**actual**), or
2. Might a reasonable person think that a situation influences how I treat this particular patient? (**perceived**).

A conflict of interest can exist in both of the above circumstances.

It is important to remember that not all conflict of interest situations occur during the practice of your profession. Let's imagine you were selling your car on Kijiji. The parents of a patient that you see regularly in the asthma clinic answers the ad and you sell them the car. Do you think this constitutes a conflict of interest?

In a conflict of interest situation, there is often a benefit (e.g., financial, personal, etc.) to you, the patient and/or the patient's family. In the above scenario, you benefit financially from selling the car to the parents and this may alter how you treat them and their child, without you even realizing it. The influence might be subtle and may not even relate directly to the actual care you provide their child. However, the next time the same parents called you to move their appointment up to an earlier date, is it possible that you might be more inclined to grant their request than they would for another patient? And if another parent of a patient was to hear about the transaction, do you think they might perceive that the other family was receiving preferential treatment?

Conflict of interest is a challenging issue because it often not black and white, and there is no threshold for what might be considered a benefit (e.g., we can't say that \$20 is a benefit but \$15 is not). It comes down to whether the benefit influences, or can be perceived to influence, the care you provide. Often the only person who can answer that question is you.