Policy on Conflict of Interest in Leadership Positions
This policy governs the level and tenor of relationship that a NASS Committee or Board member may have with industry and still be allowed to serve in the specified volunteer role. Management of the conflict includes divestment or suspension of named activities for the period of service in the leadership position. These rules apply only to activities of the North American Spine Society (including its publications, educational activities, and committee work), but not the National Association of Spine Specialists. All candidates for any Level 1 leadership position within the society will be vetted by the Conflict of Interest Review Panel (COIRP) as part of the selection process. For positions other than Level 1, a volunteer’s relationships should be reviewed by the staff and Committee/Task Force Chair (or equivalent) and any concerns brought to the COIRP for advisement. The overarching principles informing this policy can be found in the NASS COI – Disclosure & Management Policy. This policy governs NASS leadership-level volunteers, NOT general members. However, all NASS members are expected to adhere to the NASS Code of Ethics.

- These rules apply to personal interests or benefits that accrue to the individual or a member of his or her family.

- A blind trust may be used to sequester financial dealings during time of service.

- Any alleged violations of these rules will be handled by the Professional Conduct and Ethics Committee (with advisory input from the COIRP) per current procedures.

- The levels below are not intended to be exhaustive and may not specifically name every relationship; in cases where gray area exists regarding whether a specific relationship is allowable according to the categories below, the relationship should be submitted to the COIRP for guidance.

- Participation in advisory activities is undertaken as a member of the spine community and not as a member of the leadership of the North American Spine Society; this distinction must be communicated to all parties.
Leadership Level 1: Stringent Organizational Management of Conflict

Applies to:

- All members of the NASS Board of Directors (excludes Non-Voting At Large Members)
- CPT & RUC Advisors/Alternate Advisors
- All Committee and Task Force Chairs (excludes Section Chairs)
- All members of COIRP
- All members of the Nominating Committee
- Annual Meeting Program Chairs
- NASS’ Representative (& his/her Alternate) to the AMA House of Delegates
- Editor in Chief and Evidence & Methods Deputy Editors of The Spine Journal (TSJ)

Not allowed:

- Speakers’ bureau agreements
- Commercial (device/pharmaceutical), non-ACCME-accredited speaking arrangements
- Commercial (device/pharmaceutical) Scientific Advisory Boards
- Consulting arrangements with commercial (device/pharmaceutical) entities
- Serving as faculty and/or chair for fellowship programs that receive funds directly from industry
- Interest, ownership (regardless of percentage) or employment in a device or biologic distributorship (POD)
- New royalty arrangements or projects that might result in future royalties or stock agreements

Allowed:

- Previously existing royalty agreements (not to be augmented during time of service)
- Previously existing stock and stock options and other existing ownership relationships
- Leadership position in a non-profit/government agency or professional medical association (PMA)
- Providing expertise as a participant in insurance company panels and/or advisory boards for hospitals/healthcare systems (NOTE: one is expected, while doing so, to adhere to the principles outlined in NASS’ Expert Witness Guidelines and to always identify oneself as participating as an individual and not as a representative of NASS)
- Attending (not teaching) courses given by industry necessary to the practice of medicine, but must pay own travel, accommodations, and other expenses—including any registration fees if applicable—unless the NASS Executive Committee agrees to pay expenses related to attendance determined to be necessary in the performance of NASS responsibilities

Reviewed on an Individual Basis:

- Research and fellowship support relationships will be vetted by COIRP
- Insurance relationships will be vetted by COIRP
Leadership Level II: Moderate Organizational Management of Conflict

Applies to:

- Deputy Editors of The Spine Journal™ (TSJ) (except for Evidence & Methods Deputy Editors who are LLI)

Not allowed:

- Commercial (device/pharmaceutical), non-ACCME-accredited speaking arrangements
- Interest, ownership (regardless of percentage) or employment in a device or biologic distributorship (POD)

Allowed:

- Everything allowed for Level I volunteers, plus:
  - Speakers’ bureau agreements
  - Commercial (device/pharmaceutical) scientific advisory boards
  - Consulting arrangements with commercial (device/pharmaceutical) entities
  - Serving as faculty and/or chair for fellowship programs that receive funds directly from industry
  - New royalty arrangements and projects that might result in future royalties or stock agreements
  - New stock and stock options and other stock ownership relationships

Reviewed on an Individual Basis:

- Research and fellowship support relationships will be vetted by COIRP

A NOTE ON NEW APPOINTMENTS

If a potential candidate for any leadership position currently has a relationship inconsistent with the Leadership level of the proposed appointment, the individual will be given one year (from the date COIRP’s recommendation is approved by the Board of Directors) to divest him or herself from that relationship. S/he must assert in writing (via the COIRP reply form) that s/he intends to follow the recommendation by the end of that year. Program Chairs, however, must divest for one full year prior to the meeting they are chairing; i.e. from the date of the Annual Meeting immediately preceding the one being chaired.