Coxibs supplement: Has *CCJM* sold out?

(APRIL 2002)

TO THE EDITOR: I have read the *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* for many years and, by and large, have enjoyed the journal.

I recently received, with my regular *Journal*, the special issue on coxibs—which, I felt, was a disgrace.

It is often difficult enough to get honest data from reputable journals, but to foist upon me a series of articles written (with one exception) by physicians and researchers who are in the employ of drug companies or their affiliates discredits your journal *and The Cleveland Clinic!* Many of the articles sound like they came from the advertising departments of Merck et al.

American medicine is having enough trouble without becoming the agent of pharmaceutical manufacturers.

EMANUEL FRISCH, MD
Farmington Hills, MI

IN REPLY: In the preparation of their articles, the authors reviewed all available published data relevant to their specific topics. As noted in the disclosure statements at the beginning of each article, none of the authors is in the direct employ of Merck & Co., Inc. Furthermore, most of the authors have consulting relationships and receive research support from multiple pharmaceutical companies. These relationships did not produce any bias in the generation of these articles. Finally, all articles were subject to editing by myself and peer-review by the *Journal*.

MARC C. HOCHBERG, MD, MPH
Guest editor of the coxib supplement
University of Maryland
School of Medicine
Baltimore, MD

IN REPLY: Dr. Frisch's letter emphatically raises some interesting points. Both before and after receipt of this letter, we debated these questions internally in our editorial meetings, not just in the context of the coxib supplement, but of single-sponsored supplements in general. We addressed the question of whether it is reasonable to exclude articles from authors who have financial relationships with pharmaceutical companies,[1] as a few journals have done. We believe that a pragmatic approach, recognizing the fact that these authors are often the most qualified to write such articles, results in the best combination of good information and protection against undue bias as long as their relationships are disclosed. We trust that our readers have the necessary sophistication to interpret what they read in the context of the disclosed relationships.

With respect to the coxib supplement, it is appropriate to point out that this group of articles not only was reviewed by the guest editor (Dr. Hochberg), but also was subjected to the *Journal's* normal peer-review process, in this case two rheumatologists unassociated with the described work. The reviewers made many suggestions for changes, which were implemented by the authors with Dr. Hochberg's support and concurrence. In future supplements, the normal practice will be for the guest editor to assume responsibility for obtaining whatever review he or she deems necessary.

We appreciate Dr. Frisch's point of view, but we disagree with his conclusion that the coxib supplement reflects badly on the *Journal* or the *Journal's* parent institution, The Cleveland Clinic. We believe that the supplement brings together a large amount of information on some of the world's most widely used new drugs. Although there are still controversies surrounding the ultimate value of these drugs, the current state of the art is summed up in this supplement by recognized experts in the field.

JOHN D. CLOUGH, MD
Editor-in-Chief
Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine

REFERENCES

1. **Clough JD, Mandell BR.** Of bias, babies, and bathwater (From the Editors). Cleve Clin J Med 2000; 67:231.