

## **Conflicts of Interest of Members of the Australian Technical and Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)**

The ATAGI committee is responsible for providing advice about vaccines to Australia's federal Health Minister. Professor Terry Nolan was the chairman of the ATAGI committee from 2005–2014. He was also the deputy chairman of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) which provides funding for research in different scientific fields. During this time **Professor Terry Nolan's** declared conflicts of interests (COI) included being a member of a CSL vaccine advisory board (at some time) and receiving nominal payments (honoraria) as well as support for conference attendance from CSL Ltd, Novartis and GlaxoSmithKline [1]. He was also the chief investigator of the clinical trial for CSL's Panvax influenza vaccine in 400 children in 2009 whilst he was on the government's primary advisory board for developing vaccination policy in 2009. CSL's childhood influenza vaccine was removed from the market in 2010 due to the serious number of adverse events that had occurred in children from this vaccine.

**Professor Robert Booy** has been the co-director of the government National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) from 2005-2015. He was also a member of the government's advisory committee on influenza in 2009 – the Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) that is 100% funded by industry [2]. Whilst holding these positions he was also an investigator in the clinical trial for children's Panvax (H1N1) influenza vaccine in 2009 which was funded by CSL and had to be removed from the market in 2010 [1]. He has received support from CSL limited and other pharmaceutical companies to attend conferences [1]. He has been a representative on a vaccine advisory board for these companies at various times and has also received funding from Roche, Sanofi, GlaxoSmithKline and Wyeth for attending and presenting at scientific meetings [1]. These activities are a potential conflict of interest with his role as a

government policy advisor and director of the government's research and surveillance unit but they have not been made transparent to the public.

**Associate Professor Peter Richmond** was a member of the government's Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) in 2009 (a body that is 100% industry funded) and also a member of ATAGI. At other times he has been a representative on a CSL vaccine advisory board [3]. At various times he has received nominal payments from CSL (honoraria) and he was also an investigator in the CSL funded clinical trial for Panvax vaccine in 2009 [1]. He was influential in implementing the Western Australian Influenza Vaccine Efficacy trial (WAIVE) for children in WA (2008 – 2013) that was funded by CSL and Sanofi–Pasteur (WA Health Dept. 2008). He stated in 2010 that 'I don't think investigators involved in clinical trials are working for CSL' [3].

**Dr. Alan Hampson** was the chairman of the Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) in 2009 and he was previously the Research and Development Manager at CSL [4]. He was instrumental in the formation and development of the ISG and is a former deputy director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza [4]. He is also the Editor in Chief of the international journal *Influenza and other Respiratory Viruses*. He has a consultancy role with the WHO and the Australian Government.

**Anne Kelso** was a member of the ISG in 2010 and she had shares in CSL, Australia's only flu vaccine manufacturer. She was also in charge of the WHO influenza laboratory in Melbourne [5].

Dr. Judy Wilyman PhD

## References:

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2. Sweet M. 2009. The shot of PR that could undermine public health policy. *Crikey*. [www.crikey.com.au/2010/09/29/the-shot-of-pr-that-could-undermine-public-health-policy](http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/09/29/the-shot-of-pr-that-could-undermine-public-health-policy) (accessed August 2011).
3. Bitá N. 2010. "A flu jab too close for comfort". *The Australian*. 29<sup>th</sup> September <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/a-flu-jab-too-close-for-comfort/story-e6frg6z6-1225931148903>
4. Dean T. 2009. CSL Speaks out on Vaccination 'Myths'. *Australian Life Scientist*. October 1<sup>st</sup>. <http://lifescientist.com.au/content/biotechnology/news/csl-speaks-out-on-vaccination-myths--584801704>
5. Bitá N. 2011. "Flu Advisor Defends CSL Shares." *The Australian*, 8<sup>th</sup> September <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/flu-adviser-defends-csl-shares/story-fn59niix-1226131711216>