

ABA Principles for Conduct of Research on Scientific Questions

The American Beverage Association (ABA) is the trade association representing a broad spectrum of companies that manufacture and distribute non-alcoholic beverages in the United States. The beverage industry is committed to providing consumers with a wide range of beverage options that meet or exceed government safety and quality standards. Among other responsibilities, ABA sponsors research that seeks to answer scientific questions about the products its members make and the ingredients these products contain. The research contributes to the body of scientific knowledge that enables beverage consumers to make informed choices and/or supports the needs of regulatory agencies and other stakeholders. Importantly, ABA’s scientific research mission is to inform and clarify discussion through scientific inquiry held to the highest standards of integrity.

When providing support for scientific research, ABA voluntarily adheres to the following guiding principles based on recognized standards by prominent research institutions.¹ ABA will share these principles with all prospective sponsored researchers.

Transparency and Conflicts of Interest (COI)

ABA will abide by the following guiding principles:

1. Use a request-for-proposal (RFP) process when conducting research on scientific questions;
2. Never provide funding conditioned on the outcome of the research.
3. Ensure, in writing, prior to the onset of research that the sponsored researchers have the freedom and obligation to attempt to present and publish the findings within an appropriate timeframe;²
4. Require, in publications and conference presentations of the sponsored research, full disclosure of all financial interests and sponsorships from ABA;
5. Disclose ABA paid authorship arrangements related to either ABA-sponsored publications or presentations or any other venues;
6. Require that academic researchers, when they work with contract research organizations (CRO) or act as contract researchers, make clear statements of their affiliation; and require that such researchers publish only under the auspices of the CRO with full disclosure of ABA funding where relevant.

In addition to the above guiding principles, ABA-supported clinical research will be listed in a public registry or other applicable registries and/or databases, such as the U.S. National Institutes of Health’s ClinicalTrials.gov when conducting clinical studies of human participants or Prospero when performing evidence-based reviews (e.g., meta-analyses).

Research

1. ABA intends to fund only research based on a clearly stated hypothesis and an objective analysis.
2. ABA will require that study design and research remain under the control of sponsored researchers.³
3. ABA will require academic researchers to comply with applicable codes of conduct and research as required by their academic institutions.
4. ABA will require that sponsored researchers agree to follow the ethical conduct rules applicable to the research being conducted.
5. ABA will require that sponsored researchers agree to rules applicable to the protection of research subjects.
6. ABA will require sponsored researchers to follow accepted principles of scientific rigor – in order to adequately test the stated hypothesis and assure accuracy of data produced.
7. When performing research, ABA expects sponsored researchers to utilize the appropriate validated gold standard research methods. When appropriate, the guiding principles underlying the stringent Good Epidemiological Practices (GEP) and Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) standards shall be followed by the sponsored researchers.

Communications

1. ABA will make available on its website citations for, and hyperlinks to, all sponsored research at the time of publication in a peer-reviewed journal.
2. When promoting the findings of sponsored research, ABA will be fully transparent about its role in funding.

These principles were adopted by the ABA Board of Directors on April 19, 2016.

**ABA will continue to monitor the topic of industry-sponsored research and will re-assess and update this document as deemed appropriate.*

¹ ABA relied, in part, upon the following sources in developing the principles: The North American branch of the [International Life Sciences Institute \(ILSI NA\) 2009 paper “Funding food science and nutrition research: financial conflicts and scientific integrity”](#) and Food Drink Europe’s 2015 “[Principles for Research Conduct: Common ground for objective conclusions.](#)”

² For the purposes of these principles, the investigative team may include employees of the sponsoring entity. The contributions of the sponsoring organization and its employees will be noted in the acknowledgement section of any publications and presentations, as appropriate.

³ These principles, separating the science from the funding of it, will be fulfilled in a variety of ways, depending on the specific funding mechanism used in a given research project. For descriptions of the significant variety of research arrangements currently used, see guidance offered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). An excellent analysis of conflict of interest management with respect to the varied research funding mechanisms is also offered by Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB).

- NIH Office of Extramural Research - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/funding_program.htm
- FASEB COI Toolkit: recommendations, tools, and resources for the conduct and management of financial relationships between academia and industry in biomedical research. <http://www.faseb.org/coi/Tools.aspx>.
- FASEB Points for consideration in academic-industry relationship agreements. http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/PDFs/opa/PointsForConsideration_Agreements.pdf
- FASEB Conducting research. <http://www.faseb.org/coi/Tools/Investigators/Conducting-Research.aspx>