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Institutional Conflict of Interest

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To the Editor

I read with interest the Viewpoint by McKinney.¹ Although its focus is on institutional conflict of interest, I want to comment on my role, as well as the integrity of the study. Dr McKinney, a data safety monitoring committee member for a competing clinical trial, stated that I worked at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) when the reagent was invented. This is incorrect. I have been employed at the University of Pennsylvania and do not receive any salary from CHOP. The construct used to generate the recombinant virus was created in my laboratory and incorporated complementary DNA that we cloned prior to any interaction with CHOP. My association with CHOP is one of scientific collaboration on clinical trials initially sponsored by CHOP and now supported by Spark Therapeutics through a Clinical Trials Agreement.

The principal investigators and investigators conduct this study with the highest moral and scientific integrity, and we have minimized our conflict of interest to the greatest extent possible. Although I am a founder of Spark Therapeutics, I have no financial ties to the company—I do not have equity or stock options and have not received any salary or consulting fees. My spouse, who is the principal investigator for the University of Pennsylvania site and responsible for the conduct of the *RPE65* phase 1 to 3 trials, has no equity as well. I received minimal compensation for my role as scientific director during the 11 years that I worked on the phase 1 to 3 *RPE65* gene therapy trials. While my spouse and I are coinventors on a patent for this technology, we waived any claim to royalties from this invention in 2002. This information is known to the 3 separate conflict-of-interest committees and the 3 different institutional review boards (from CHOP, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Iowa) that oversee this study.

Finally, the Viewpoint by McKinney¹ implied that there are no procedures in place to ensure the quality and integrity of the data. Two independent groups perform masked grading of the primary outcome measure and perform independent functional assessments of the trial

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Conflict of Interest Disclosures: The author has completed and submitted the ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest. Dr Bennett serves on a data safety monitoring committee for Genzyme/Sanofi, is a founder of GenSight Therapeutics, has consulted for Novartis and Astellas Pharmaceuticals, and served as a scientific advisor for Avalanche Technologies. In addition, Dr Bennett has US patent application 8 147 823 licensed to Spark Therapeutics. No other disclosures are reported.

participants. A data safety monitoring committee and 2 external data monitoring groups monitor data collection.

References

1. McKinney RE Jr. Institutional conflict of interest and the translational pathway [published online March 31, 2016]. *JAMA Ophthalmol*.