

Editorial Comment

This editorial comment arises from concerns raised by a Letter to the Editor from Dr. Harry Kostenbauder and the response from the primary author, Dr. Rajesh Balkrishnan,¹ regarding a paper published last year in *Clinical Therapeutics*.²

In our view, Dr. Kostenbauder raised legitimate concerns about whether the 2007 paper adequately revealed its association with a 2004 paper³ and about the methods used for the 2 publications. Both Dr. Kostenbauder's comments and the author's reply raised several worthwhile matters, but they also appeared somewhat personal in tone. With respect to the primary issue of whether the 2 publications were sufficiently distinct, the 2007 data were updates from the same database used for the 2004 paper, as stated by the author in his response. It is true that the 2004 paper analyzed total health care costs, whereas the 2007 paper analyzed patient visits; however, the relationship between the 2 papers was not clearly noted, and the prior publication was not referenced in the 2007 paper.

Whether or not the conclusions were biased because of the source of study support, as implied in Dr. Kostenbauder's letter, is a matter of conjecture. The primary author has not, in our view, adequately acknowledged the legitimate concerns raised by the lack of a reference to the 2004 paper in the 2007 study.

Clinical Therapeutics and its editors value input from readers and support reasonable and reasoned discussions based on objective issues. The process of honest and open review and comment is essential to the scientific process. Authors and editors must attempt to keep their emotional responses out of the process. If a reader has legitimate concerns, these should be addressed in a spirit of respect and understanding. We must apologize if anyone believes that we have not been open to their views or concerns. We simply missed the 2004 paper in our review of the 2007 manuscript.

We encourage an open forum and ask that all readers and authors adopt a professional attitude toward asking and responding to questions raised by careful review of published papers. Editors make mistakes, as do authors and readers. However, any assertions, or even implications, of intentional deception or concealment require proof before being voiced. Our guiding principle is the objective search for answers to empirically testable questions; consequently, an *ad hominem* approach is outside the realm of constructive exchange required to maintain the spirit of inquiry.

We also want to request that whenever possible, authors and readers consider handling such questions and answers through direct personal contact and discussion rather than by using the journal as an intermediary.

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