



## Editor's note

Following publication of the December 1999 issue of *International Journal of Impotence Research*, Drs Udelson and Goldstein, two of the authors of the paper 'Axial penile buckling forces vs Rigiscan™ radial rigidity as a function of intracavernosal pressure: why Rigiscan does not predict functional erections in individual patients'<sup>1</sup> wrote to the Editors as follows:

'Upon receipt of the reprints of our paper it was discovered that our paper had been offered for editorial comment without our knowledge and without any opportunity for us to reply. We believe this to be unacademic and unprofessional. We have never minded individuals who do not agree with our research, but, as members of an academic Society, we expect to be given the opportunity to respond at the time of original publication.

More serious was the lack of disclosure by one of the reviewers selected to submit editorial comments. Gerald Timm, inventor of the Rigiscan™ device and owner of the company, has made a substantial profit from this product, but did not divulge in his comments his financial association with the Rigiscan™.

In today's academic journals, financial conflict and academic integrity are very relevant issues. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, The *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *Urology*, for example, have all been struggling with this issue. It is absolutely essential to report relationships, financial or otherwise, to products in academic journals in order to maintain academic credibility.

We believe that the publication of the editorial comments without the opportunity to respond in the same issue and without full disclosure has created an unethical and damaging situation for the *International Journal of Impotence Research* and, by implication, the members of the International Society of Impotence Research.'

Dr Gorm Wagner and I, as co-editors of the journal accept, on behalf of the publishers and the scientific community, responsibility for ensuring that articles submitted for publication receive fair and unbiased review and that all the procedures followed are in line with best editorial practice.

Publication of editorial comments has been part of *International Journal of Impotence Research's* policy for some while: it is our opinion that these comments offer a balance to manuscripts that may have a different opinion or exciting new finding.

I was in error in not sending the editorial comments to Dr Udelson and his colleagues for response prior to publication, but this has not been my practice.

The editorial comments were written by Gerald Timm and Laurence A Levine. Gerald Timm is the inventor of the Rigiscan™ device that was being criticised in the article by Udelson *et al*, and, further, Dr Timm is also part owner of the company manufacturing the device, Timm Medical Technologies. The authors have rightly objected that none of this information was disclosed, as it should have been given the potential for conflict of interest, in the commentaries. I apologise to Dr Udelson and his co-authors for its absence.

Dr Udelson and Dr Goldstein have been given the opportunity to respond to Dr Timm's and Dr Levine's editorial comments in this issue (pp 3–8).

A Melman

## Reference

- 1 Udelson D *et al*. Axial penile buckling forces vs Rigiscan™ radial rigidity as a function of intracavernosal pressure: why Rigiscan does not predict functional erections in individual patients. *Int J Impot Res* 1999; **11**: 327–339.