**Manuscript evaluation guidelines**Title: Conflict of interest in systematic reviews and its implications on public health policy  
  
1. Importance of the paper  
  
           Does it address issues relevant to the fields of bioethics and medical ethics in the developing countries?

Yes, the manuscript definitely addresses the issues relevant to the fields of bioethics and medical ethics globally. The focus of the paper is global and not developing countries per se. However, adding a section on how the issues related to COI and its implications on health policy are intensified in developing country or resource poor settings will be extremely valuable.   
  
2. Is it topical?  
  
           Is the issue discussed from another country's/culture perspective?

The issue discussed in this manuscript is globally relevant and is discussed in global context. I would encourage bringing in local/developing world context as explained above. The issues leading to publication bias and hence biased systematic reviews, the power of pharma industry in sponsoring and influencing research, poor trial registration and incomplete information on registries and lack of transparency in disclosing COIs are just as much relevant and prevalent in developing world as in the global context (topic of the manuscript), if not even more.   
  
           Will it influence practice or policy?

Influencing policy and practice is plausible but not immediately. The way I see the impact of this article on influencing policy and practice is through starting a conversation on the topic.   
  
           Is it too specialized for the journal?

No, it is not too specialized for the journal. In fact, the journal is the right choice to start a debate on this topic. I do believe though that some additional input on developing world/Indian perspective would add to its value and I encourage authors to consider that.   
  
3. Originality  
  
           Is the information /comment new?

The information is not necessarily new. However, it is synthesized, analyzed and presented in a coherent structure and raises important issues that should be discussed.

Is there any likelihood of plagiarism?  
  
Though I have not checked for plagiarism in particular, I find the statements and arguments in the manuscript generally well supported by the references. If there are any areas where citation might be needed, I will point those in the detailed comments to the authors. Please refer to my detailed comments on two references you have cited for the following statement on page 3 under the section ‘Bias in publication’. Researchers have also been found to falsify data, often at the behest of the sponsor or funder [36, 37].

4. Conclusions  
           Is the interpretation warranted, unwarranted, well developed?  
The conclusions need to be strengthened and contextualized. Please refer to my detailed notes in the manuscript.   
           Does the article contain loose generalisations?  
I have pointed out some of the generalizations in my detailed comments embedded in the manuscript.   
           Are there any important omissions?  
Belief/argument that only public funding should facilitate research or completely precluding research funded fully or partially by stakeholders with vested interests needs to be supported/teased out better. Please refer to my detailed comments throughout the text and especially in the section conclusion and recommendations.   
  
5. Other comments  
Please refer to the detailed comments below.

6. Recommendation  
  
 Accept as is  
  
 **Accept with modifications (specify) major revisions**  
  
 - style

- **substance**  
Please refer to my detailed comments on the content of the paper below. They might help authors to revise their documents or improve clarity of the argument.   
  
7. Separate comments for the author

I provide detail comments in your text.

\***Please let us know whether you would like your name to be published as a reviewer of the manuscript. This is optional.**

Reviewer 1:

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6. The conclusions need to be strengthened and contextualized. Please refer to my detailed notes in the manuscript.
7. The belief/argument that only public funding should facilitate research or completely precluding research funded fully or partially by stakeholders with vested interests needs to be supported/teased out better. Please refer to my detailed comments throughout the text and especially in the section conclusion and recommendations