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Disclosure of conflicts of interest - Professor Allen Cheng

Elizabeth Hart <elizmhart@gmail.com>

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To: Allen Cheng <Allen.Cheng@monash.edu>

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For the attention of:

Professor Allen Cheng

Co-Chair of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation

Member of the COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments for Australia - Science and Industry Technical Advisory Group

Dear Professor Cheng

I seek clarification from you in regards to conflict of interest disclosures.

For example, in the previous ATAGI Conflicts of Interest document (see attached) it was noted you were a Site Investigator for a number of infectious disease studies, and that Alfred Health received payment from Merck, GSK, Biocryst, George Clinical and Gilead. However, in the recent Summary of disclosures from ATAGI members - July 2020 document (attached), no information is provided about the identity of the funders of the studies with which you and/or Alfred Health are involved.

Professor Cheng, can you please clarify how the studies you are involved with are funded? For example, I understand you are receiving **\$1.7 million from the Federal Government / NHMRC** for your project which is looking at vaccine preparedness, in particular with an influenza and pneumonia focus, with the capacity to apply to coronavirus and future epidemics/pandemics. In the interests of transparency, funding information/sources should be clearly disclosed in the ATAGI Summary of disclosures document.

In **the media release** making your \$1.7M funding announcement, Health Minister Greg Hunt reports you've "played a very important role as part of the medical expert panel advising the National Cabinet - the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee". Your membership of this panel is not recorded in the current ATAGI Summary of disclosures document.

Professor Cheng, it's also notable that you are Victoria's Deputy Chief Health Officer, and this is also not disclosed in the current ATAGI Summary of disclosures document.

There is growing disquiet about the ongoing lockdown in Melbourne and the motives behind this prolonged lockdown. Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews is **on the record** saying: "We will have public health orders, directions from the chief health officer of one form or another for quite some time...**A vaccine would be really the only thing that might get you to a place where you didn't need Brett making orders of one kind or another**". (My emphasis.)

Premier Andrews is referring to Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton in his comments, with the clear implication that restrictions will be maintained in Victoria until a coronavirus vaccine is available.

This is very concerning Professor Cheng. As Victoria's Deputy Chief Health Officer you are obviously in a position of influence, including in regards to your government-funded research, and also in regards to promotion of vaccine products via your role as co-chair of ATAGI. Your role as Victoria's Deputy Chief Health Officer should be disclosed in the ATAGI Summary of disclosures document, along with any other role or position of influence, e.g. the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Professor Cheng, as I raised in **my previous email to COVID-19 group chair Dr Brendan Murphy**, **it's essential that any potential conflicts of interest of the people advising on the Australian government's expenditure of taxpayers' monies be transparent and publicly accessible.**

I am still awaiting Dr Murphy's response to my request for a conflicts of interest disclosure document providing details of members' current roles/positions, and any current and previous associations and/or employment with the pharmaceutical industry, e.g. detailing role/position, research grants, consultancies, honorariums, committee memberships, plus any shareholdings in pharmaceutical companies, (e.g. CSL and others), royalties received, directorships etc, and similar information for the institutions/organisations members represent.

Professor Cheng, I request your response on this matter. This email, and your response, is being copied to other parties, this is a matter of public interest.

Sincerely

Elizabeth Hart

Independent person investigating the over-use of vaccine products and conflicts of interest in vaccination policy

Attachments:

1. ATAGI Conflict of Interest document.
2. ATAGI Declarations of Interest - Summary of disclosures from ATAGI members - July 2020.
3. 'We can't keep living like this': COVID-19 state of emergency opens political divide. The Age, 23 August 2020.

3 attachments

 **atagi-conflict-interest-disclosures Nov 2018.pdf**
31K

 **atagi-declarations-of-interest July 2020.pdf**
186K

 **'We can't keep living like this'_ COVID-19 state of emergency opens political divide.pdf**
1952K