

## Summary: Magazine Watchdogs

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- *Focus* is Italy's top popular-science magazine.
- *Focus* decided to run a story about the myths and presumptions surrounding obesity that first appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.
- At first glance there appeared to be few conflicts of interest for the authors.
- It was later disclosed that the conflicts of interest were very long.
- This emphasised the importance of looking for conflicts of interest as an editor of a science or medical magazine.
- Problems with conflicts of interest in Italy are compounded by the mistrust felt about academic information and with health information societies, as well as with patient groups – much of this is now funded by firms with a vested interest.
- To combat this, and to minimise the risks of publishing stories that are compromised by conflicts of interest in the future, *Focus* has started to compile a database of press releases thought to have originated from industry, and to have these analysed with a semantic program which recognises and categorises words and phrases associated with researchers, patient groups, health profession societies, universities and pharmaceutical companies. This research is ongoing.