

## **Report of the World Trade Center Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee's**

### **Workgroup on Independent Peer Review**

**September 23, 2016**

#### **Qualifications and professional characteristics of peer review pool**

A pool of peer reviewers should be formed by NIOSH that can be drawn upon when a petition is received. Peer reviewers should be individuals with background and experience in relevant occupational and environment research and/or clinical practice; this includes epidemiology, mental health, toxicology, and occupational and environmental medicine. These individuals should demonstrate publications in areas relevant to WTC health effects and hazards, and other disasters. In forming this pool, we advise that no exclusionary criteria be applied.

#### **Conflict of interest (COI) and confidentiality**

NIOSH should develop a transparent, written COI policy for selection of peer reviewers, to ensure that bias can be minimized in the peer review process and the outcome of the review achieves maximum credibility. The identity of the reviewers should be made available to the public after the review is completed along with a summary of the peer review comments and responses without attribution of specific comments to specific reviewers.

#### **Selection of peer reviewers for petitions**

The WTC administrator should be responsible for ensuring that the peer review process and reviewers are balanced and expected to give an unbiased scientific review. After receipt of a petition for adding a condition, the selection of the peer reviewers should be made by NIOSH with consideration of the subject matter relevant to the petition. Individuals on the peer review pool may also be useful as consultants to assist NIOSH in their initial scientific review of the evidence supporting the addition of condition. NIOSH may consider, if needed, the retention of an outside contractor (with specific guidelines developed by NIOSH) to select the peer reviewers and coordinate the review.