Credibility crisis in pediatric psychiatry

To the editor:

Your September 2008 editorial titled “Credibility crisis in pediatric psychiatry” alleges that I failed to “adequately declare” income from pharmaceutical companies. This allegation appears to be based on a newspaper article that was not fact checked with me or anyone in my institution. The Harvard Medical School Standing Committee on Conflicts of Interest is currently reviewing these claims and fairness dictates withholding judgment until that process has been completed.

Your statement is at odds with the extensive disclosures I have made to the institutions that employ me. In addition, all of my articles contain full disclosures of my relationships, making it amply evident and clear to the readers that there was never any intent to conceal relationships with pharmaceutical companies. Furthermore, the income in question was earned over close to 8 years from pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical sources.

You also call “into question the credibility and impartiality” that I brought to several of the clinical trials that I guided. However, the results of my early trials on pediatric bipolar disorder were replicated by others in rigorous placebo-controlled double-blind trials that have led to FDA approval of medications for childhood-onset bipolar disorder, a disorder which previously had no FDA-approved treatments.

Editorials such as yours are exceedingly damaging, not only to me personally and to the field of child psychiatry generally, but most importantly to the many children suffering from severe psychiatric illnesses and their families. Indeed, your rush to conclusions without examining data is especially ironic considering your editorial’s own call for “independent, objective assessment” and the need for “objectivity and neutrality.”

I have devoted my entire career to scientific research that benefits children suffering from severe psychiatric illnesses and their

families. I am dedicated to the advancement of medical treatment for children suffering from severe psychiatric illnesses and their families through rigorous and objective study. In one respect, however, you are right: there is an “urgent need to put more science behind child psychiatry.” That is precisely what I have devoted my life to doing.

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COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

The author declares competing financial interests: details accompany the full-text HTML version of the paper at <http://www.nature.com/natureneuroscience/>.