

E-9.0115 Financial Relationships with Industry in Continuing Medical Education

In an environment of rapidly changing information and emerging technology, physicians must maintain the knowledge, skills, and values central to a healing profession. They must protect the independence and commitment to fidelity and service that define the medical profession.

Financial or in-kind support from pharmaceutical, biotechnology or medical device companies that have a direct interest in physicians' recommendations creates conditions in which external interests could influence the availability and/or content of continuing medical education (CME). Financial relationships between such sources and individual physicians who organize CME, teach in CME, or have other roles in continuing professional education can carry similar potential to influence CME in undesired ways.

CME that is independent of funding or in-kind support from sources that have financial interests in physicians' recommendations promotes confidence in the independence and integrity of professional education, as does CME in which organizers, teachers, and others involved in educating physicians do not have financial relationships with industry that could influence their participation. When possible, CME should be provided without such support or the participation of individuals who have financial interests in the educational subject matter.

In some circumstances, support from industry or participation by individuals who have financial interests in the subject matter may be needed to enable access to appropriate, high-quality CME. In these circumstances, physician-learners should be confident that vigorous efforts will be made to maintain the independence and integrity of educational activities.

Individually and collectively physicians must ensure that the profession independently defines the goals of physician education, determines educational needs, and sets its own priorities for CME. Physicians who attend CME activities should expect that, in addition to complying with all applicable professional standards for accreditation and certification, their colleagues who organize, teach, or have other roles in CME will:

- (a) be transparent about financial relationships that could potentially influence educational activities.
- (b) provide the information physician-learners need to make critical judgments about an educational activity, including:
 - (i) the source(s) and nature of commercial support for the activity; and/or
 - (ii) the source(s) and nature of any individual financial relationships with industry related to the subject matter of the activity; and
 - (iii) what steps have been taken to mitigate the potential influence of financial relationships.
- (c) protect the independence of educational activities by:
 - (i) ensuring independent, prospective assessment of educational needs and priorities;
 - (ii) adhering to a transparent process for prospectively determining when industry support is needed;
 - (iii) giving preference in selecting faculty or content developers to similarly qualified experts who do not have financial interests in the educational subject matter;
 - (iv) ensuring a transparent process for making decisions about participation by physicians who may have a financial interest in the educational subject matter;
 - (v) permitting individuals who have a substantial financial interest in the educational subject matter to participate in CME only when their participation is central to the success of the educational activity; the activity meets a demonstrated need in the professional community; and the source, nature, and magnitude of the individual's specific financial interest is disclosed; and
 - (vi) taking steps to mitigate potential influence commensurate with the nature of the financial interest(s) at issue, such as prospective peer review. (I, V)