

# STANDARDS FOR COMMERCIAL SUPPORT OF CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

## Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education

### *Preamble*

The purpose of continuing medical education (CME) is to enhance the physician's ability to care for patients. It is the responsibility of the accredited sponsor of a CME activity to assure that the activity is designed primarily for that purpose.

Accredited sponsors often receive financial and other support from non-accredited commercial organizations. Such support can contribute significantly to the quality of CME activities. The purpose of these Standards is to describe appropriate behavior of accredited sponsors in planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating certified CME activities for which commercial support is received.

### *Standards*

#### 1. General Responsibilities of Accredited Sponsors

Accredited sponsors are responsible for the content, quality and scientific integrity of all CME activities certified for credit. Identification of continuing medical education needs, determination of educational objectives, and selection of content, faculty, educational methods and materials is the responsibility of the accredited sponsor. Similarly, evaluation must be designed and performed by the accredited sponsor.

##### a. Basic Design Requirements for CME Activities

In designing educational activities, the accredited sponsor must assure that the activities have the following characteristics: They must be free of commercial bias for or against any product. If the activities are concerned with commercial products, they must present objective information about those products, based on scientific methods generally accepted in the medical community.

##### b. Independence of Accredited Sponsors

The design and production of educational activities shall be the ultimate responsibility of the accredited sponsor. Commercial supporters of such activities shall not control the planning, content or execution of the activity. To assure compliance with this standard, the following requirements must be adhered to:

##### 1) Assistance with Preparation of Educational Materials

The content of slides and reference materials must remain the ultimate responsibility of the faculty selected by the accredited sponsor. A commercial supporter may be asked to help with the preparation of conference-related educational materials, but these materials shall not, by their content or format, advance the specific proprietary interests of the commercial supporter.

##### 2) Assistance with Educational Planning

An accredited sponsor may obtain information that will assist in planning and producing an educational activity from an outside source whether commercial or not.

However, acceptance by an accredited sponsor of advice or services concerning speakers, invitees or other educational matters, including content, shall not be among the conditions of providing support by a commercial organization.

3) Marketing CME Activities

Only the accredited sponsor may authorize a commercial supporter to disseminate information about a CME activity to the medical community. However, the content of such information is the responsibility of the accredited sponsor, and any such information must identify the educational activity as produced by the accredited sponsor.

4) Activities Repeated Many Times

Accredited sponsors that offer commercially supported educational activities that repeat essentially the same information each time they are given, must demonstrate that every iteration of that activity meets all of the Essentials and Standards.

5) Educational Activities or Materials Prepared by Proprietary Entities

When accredited sponsors offer educational activities consisting of concepts or materials prepared by proprietary entities, such activities must adhere to the Essentials and Standards in all respects, especially with regard to the provisions concerning the independence of the accredited sponsor in planning, designing, delivering, and evaluating such activities.

2. Enduring Materials

The accredited sponsor is responsible for the quality, content, and use of enduring materials for purposes of CME credit. [For the definition, see ACCME “Standards for Enduring Materials].

3. Identifying Products, Reporting on Research, and Discussing Unlabeled Uses of Products

a. **Generic and Trade Names**

**Presentations must give a balanced view of therapeutic options. Faculty use of generic names will contribute to this impartiality. If trade names are used, those of several companies should be used rather than only that of a single supporting company.**

b. **Reporting Research Material**

**Objective rigorous, scientific research conducted by commercial companies is an essential part of the process of developing new pharmaceutical or other medical products or devices. It is desirable that direct reports of such research be communicated to the medical community. An offer by a commercial entity to provide a presentation reporting the result of scientific research shall be accompanied by a detailed outline of the presentation, which shall be used by the accredited sponsor to confirm the scientific objectivity of the presentation. Such information must conform to the generally accepted standards of experimental design, data collection and analysis.**

c. **Unlabeled Uses of Products**

**When an unlabeled use of a commercial product, or an investigational use not yet approved for any purpose is discussed during an educational activity, the accredited**

**sponsor shall require the speaker to disclose that the product is not labeled for the use under discussion or that the product is still investigational.**

4. Exhibits and Other Commercial Activities

a. Exhibits

When commercial exhibits are part of the overall program, arrangements for these should not influence planning or interfere with the presentation of CME activity.

b. Commercial Activities During Educational Activities

No commercial promotional materials shall be displayed or distributed in the same room immediately before, during, or immediately after an educational activity certified for credit.

c. Commercial Supporters at Educational Activities

Representatives of commercial supporters may attend an educational activity, but may not engage in sales activities while in the room where the activity takes place.

5. Management of Funds from Commercial Sources

a. Independence of the Accredited Sponsor in the Use of Contributed Funds

The ultimate decision regarding funding arrangements for the CME activities must be the responsibility of the accredited sponsor. Funds from a commercial source should be in the form of an educational grant made payable to the accredited sponsor for the support of programming. The terms, conditions, and purposes of such grants must be documented by a signed agreement between the commercial supporter and the accredited sponsor. All support associated with a CME activity, whether in the form of an educational grant or not, must be given with the full knowledge and approval of the accredited sponsor. No other funds from a commercial source shall be paid to the director of the activity, faculty, or others involved with the supported activity.

b. Payments to Faculty

Payment of reasonable honoraria and reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for faculty is customary and proper.

c. Acknowledgement of Commercial Support

Commercial support must be acknowledged in printed announcements and brochures, however, reference must not be made to specific products.

d. Accountability for Commercial Support

Following the CME activity, upon request, the accredited sponsor should be prepared to report to each commercial supporter, and other relevant parties, information concerning the expenditure of funds each has provided. Likewise, each commercial supporter should report to the accredited sponsor information concerning their expenditures in support of the activity.

6. Commercially Supported Social Events

Commercially supported social events at CME activities should not compete with, nor take precedence over the educational events.

7. Policy on Disclosure of Faculty and Sponsor Relationships

a. Disclosure Policy for all CME Activities

An accredited sponsor shall have a policy requiring disclosure of the existence of any significant financial interest or other relationship a faculty member or the sponsor has with the manufacturer(s) of any commercial product(s) discussed in an educational presentation. All certified CME activities shall conform to this policy.

b. Disclosure in Conference Materials

CME faculty or sponsor relationships with commercial supporters shall be disclosed to participants prior to educational activities in brief statements in conference materials such as brochure, syllabi, exhibits, poster sessions, and also post-meeting publications.

c. Disclosure for Regularly Scheduled Activities

In the case of regularly scheduled events, such as grand rounds, disclosure shall be made by the moderator of the activity after consultation with the faculty member or a representative of the supporter. Written documentation that disclosure information was given to participants shall be entered in the file for that activity.

8. Financial Support for Participants in Educational Activities

a. Expenses of Non-Faculty Attendees

In connection with an educational activity offered by an accredited sponsor, the sponsor may not use funds originating from a commercial source to pay for travel, lodging, registration fees, honoraria, or personal expenses for non-faculty attendees. Subsidies for hospitality should not be provided outside of modest meals or social events that are held as part of the activity.

b. Scholarships for Medical Students, Residents and Fellows

Scholarship or other special funding to permit medical students, residents, or fellows to attend selected educational conferences may be provided, as long as the selection of students, residents or fellows who will receive the funds is made either by the academic or training institution, or by the accredited sponsor with the full concurrence of the academic or training institution.