

Guideline

Subject: Relationship Between Fellows and the Healthcare Industry
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These guidelines are intended to assist Fellows of the College including the Faculties with professional and ethical matters which can arise from their involvement with the healthcare industry. The healthcare industry includes such organisations as drug companies, equipment and reagent suppliers, providers of legal, financial and insurance services, government organisations and other private companies. It must always be recalled that while the healthcare industry generally makes its approaches to doctors or their professional organisations, the ultimate beneficiary of the approach must be the patient(s) for whom – directly or indirectly – the individual doctor and/or the professional organisation provides services and/or clinical care.

1. General Principles

- 1.1 When dealing with the healthcare industry Fellows should always maintain professional autonomy and commitment to scientific method.
- 1.2 There should be a formal and open acknowledgement by the Fellow or group receiving financial or material support from the healthcare industry for any activity with which they are involved.
- 1.3 Fellows should not allow their names to be associated with any form of direct advertising unless the commercial nature of their involvement is clearly stated.
- 1.4 An association between the College and the healthcare industry does not imply endorsement of the product or service being promoted by the industry. A specific disclaimer to this effect should be included in brochures or other advertising of healthcare industry promotions.
- 1.5 Professional benefits to colleagues and/or trainees and ultimately to patients should form the basis for any association with the healthcare industry.
- 1.6 During the negotiation of any agreement with which the College is directly or indirectly involved, all correspondence must refer to the College status of the negotiator. The final agreement must be subject to College approval. When negotiations are conducted in a personal capacity, no mention of a College affiliation can be made.
- 1.7 Fellows should not accept, nor allow their practice to be influenced by, personal gifts or offers of entertainment from the healthcare industry.

2. Training Programs

- 2.1 Support from healthcare industry sources should be directed to the educational activity as a whole. Normal College guidelines should be followed for the development of the program which must not be under the control of the commercial organisation concerned.
- 2.2 If a prize is offered for work performed by a Fellow or Trainee, the selection of the prize-winner must be entirely under the control of an appropriately constituted and independent Committee.
- 2.3 Where funding is provided in whole or in part of a training position, as a rule this should be paid through a neutral third party such as the Hospital or University responsible for employment of the Trainee. All matters related to employment must be subject to the normal rules of the employer.

3. College Annual Scientific Meetings

- 3.1 The nature and extent of support for meetings should be negotiated by the Organising Committee and must form a part of the report from and the accounts of that meeting. It is entirely appropriate that such support be acknowledged but there must be a disclaimer to separate that support from endorsement (by the College) of any service and/or products being promoted by the commercial organisation(s) involved.
- 3.2 Any profit resulting directly or indirectly from support by the healthcare industry must be devoted to further educational or research activities.
- 3.3 Normal College guidelines for control of the meeting or any session of the meeting must be observed. It is not permissible for primary control of the meeting or any session of the meeting and its advertising to be taken over by a commercial organisation.

4. Workshops, Seminars and Meetings Sponsored by Commercial Organisations

- 4.1 The activity must be under the control of a College based organising Committee with appropriate representation from the healthcare industry.
- 4.2 It is entirely appropriate that support by the healthcare industry be fully and formally acknowledged by the Organising Committee.
- 4.3 When a commercial organisation takes responsibility for a meeting, the College should not be associated with that meeting and specifically should not endorse any service or product being promoted by the meeting.
- 4.4 When Fellows or Trainees are invited to attend commercially sponsored meetings (often with associated social activity), the decision to attend or not should be made having regard to the General Principles.
- 4.5 Fellows and Trainees speaking at commercially sponsored meetings should consider the General Principles. They should be aware that they are not representing the College and should not purport to represent the College. Their views are not necessarily those of the College.

5. Research Projects

- 5.1 It is accepted that the healthcare industry is a major sponsor of research. It is essential that a written contract be established between all parties involved. The contract should involve a neutral third party such as a University or a Research Foundation. The contract should be subject to the rules of the third party with all financial arrangements being channelled through them.
- 5.2 Normal Ethical Committee procedures must be followed and must include full prospective disclosure of the proposed commercial association. This will also apply when seeking patient consent for their participation in any such study.
- 5.3 Before participating in research Fellows should be satisfied that the project is ethically defensible, socially responsible and scientifically valid.

6. Travel

- 6.1 Funds offered on a personal basis to facilitate attendance at an educational activity should be carefully considered having regard to the General Principles noted above. Funding should always be acknowledged in any presentation or report. A letter of thanks may be useful and should be copied to the organisers of the educational activity.
- 6.2 Travel and tour expenses for a commercially sponsored educational visit to other centres should be considered in terms of the likely professional benefit to all involved. It is essential that talks or lectures are presented in an unbiased manner while acknowledging the support given. A specific disclaimer in respect of the sponsor's services or product may be appropriate.