



How to Resolve Conflicts of Interest

AAPA's CME standards require that all conflicts of interest be resolved prior to any CME presentation. This document offers several scenarios that may occur as CME sessions are developed and speakers are selected. They have been created to assist constituent organizations by providing examples that are frequently encountered. Constituent organizations that encounter conflicts of interest that are not described below are asked to contact AAPA to discuss those situations.

Policy Reminders

The AAPA Policy Regarding Resolution of Conflicts of Interest Involving CME Activities states

It is the policy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) to ensure balance, independence, objectivity and scientific rigor in all educational programs which are approved for AAPA Category I CME credit. Any existing or perceived conflict of interest could affect the integrity of a CME activity and must be resolved in advance.
and

A conflict of interest is considered to exist if an individual has both

- *A financial relationship with a commercial interest and*
- *the opportunity to affect the content of CME about the products or services of that commercial interest.*

The following scenarios are common to many of AAPA's constituent organizations as they seek both speakers and funding for conferences. The resolutions described are provided as guidelines to help you resolve situations that may arise within your own organization.

It is recognized that there are situations in which it may be difficult to determine if a true conflict exists, or if a presentation could, indeed, be impartial and fairly balanced. In these situations, AAPA's Director of Continuing Medical Education should be consulted.

Speakers' honoraria

Scenario 1: Pharmaceutical company asks to pay honorarium directly to a speaker.

Resolution: Pharmaceutical company is advised that all support money must be submitted directly to constituent organization, which then pays speaker honoraria and all other conference expenses.

Scenario 2: Speaker travels to Anytown at the expense of a pharmaceutical company to give a promotional presentation. While still in Anytown, speaker is invited to give an educational presentation to a local CME group. Pharmaceutical company agrees to pay additional honorarium for the second presentation, as well as pay directly for an additional night's lodging and additional per diem.

Resolution: All expenses for the second presentation must be paid with an educational grant to the local CME group which will then pay for the second honorarium, additional lodging and *per diem*. Return airfare or mileage may be paid directly by the pharmaceutical company. In addition, since it is likely that the first presentation was promotional, the slide set and speaker notes for the second presentation must be peer-reviewed for fair balance. Any company logos must be removed from slides.

Speakers' bureaus

Scenario 3: Presenter is on the speakers' bureau of several pharmaceutical companies.

Resolution: Presentation, including slide set, must be reviewed by another clinician to assure fair balance. No company logos may appear on any of the slides.

Scenario 4: Pharmaceutical company provides a list of speakers who have been through its own training program. Grant approval is contingent upon selection of one of the names on the pharmaceutical company's list.

Resolution: No CME credit can be awarded.

Research grants

Scenario 5: Research grant given to a medical practice.

Resolution: No conflict of interest exists.

Scenario 6: Research grant given to a medical school.

Resolution: No conflict of interest exists.

Scenario 7: Research grant given to a speaker.

Resolution: Researcher/speaker reports only on findings and does not apply findings to patient care. If it is determined that the researcher/speaker should address application of research findings to patient care, then the constituent organization must select an impartial clinician to review the portion of the talk that addresses patient care, and, if bias is detected, modify the presentation to remove the bias. Suggested applications to

patient care must be based on the preponderance of evidence. The speaker must adhere to the peer-reviewed/modified script.

Medical Education Companies

Scenario 8: A Medical Education company has received a grant from a pharmaceutical company to support a series of presentations on a topic within their area of interest. The Medical Education company has selected speakers whose disclosures indicate that they have no significant financial interest in the pharmaceutical company that is supporting the series of talks. The speakers' honoraria and expenses are to be paid by the Medical Education Company.

Resolution: No conflict of interest exists. CME credit can be awarded, based on appropriate learning objectives.

Scenario 9: Same scenario as above, except that the pharmaceutical company which is supporting the series of talks has selected all speakers.

Resolution: No CME credit can be awarded.

Company-generated slides

Scenario 10: A speaker with no relationships to disclose wants to use slides that have been prepared by a pharmaceutical company. The pharmaceutical company's logo appears on all slides.

Resolution: Company logo must be removed. Slide footnotes must cite source of data.

Pharmaceutical Company brochures

Scenario 11: A speaker wants to distribute a patient-education brochure that includes the logo of the pharmaceutical company that has prepared the material.

Resolution: The brochure may not be distributed in the presentation room. It may be distributed in the exhibit hall or other location that is not within the obligate path of the presentation room. (That is, learners are not required to walk past the place where the brochure is displayed in order to attend the talk.)

Planning Committee Members

Scenario 12: A CME planning committee member has significant financial relationships with a pharmaceutical company which is interested in a topic about which she would like to write learning objectives for an upcoming conference.

Resolution: Assign the task of writing learning objectives for this topic to another planning committee member. Alternatively, the first draft of the learning objectives could be written by the planning committee member with the conflict of interest; a second committee member must review them to ensure fair balance.