



AAPA Policy Regarding Resolution of Conflicts of Interest Involving CME Activities

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 continuing medical education (CME) activity and must be resolved in advance.

Identifying a conflict of interest

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.

A financial relationship includes all of the following as may relate to the individual, spouse, family member, partner or significant other:

- Salary
- Royalty
- Intellectual property rights
- Consulting fees
- Honoraria
- Stocks or stock options, excluding diversified mutual funds
- Other financial benefit

Disclosures

AAPA's disclosure form must be completed by all content planning committee members, authors, and speakers. Individuals who refuse to provide disclosures will be disqualified from participation in the CME activity.

Resolution of Conflicts of Interest

All conflicts of interest must be resolved prior to the delivery of the educational activity for which a conflict of interest has been identified. Conflicts of interest will be resolved on an individual basis using one or more of the following methods, as may be appropriate:

1. *Alter financial relationships.* An individual may divest themselves of the relationship that is producing the conflict of interest.
2. *Alter control over content.* An individual's control of CME content can be altered to remove the opportunity to affect content related to the products and services of a commercial interest. For example,
 - a) Assign the content that is the subject of potential bias to another individual who is free of potential conflict regarding that subject matter.
 - b) Change the focus of the CME activity so that the content is not about products or services of the commercial interest that is the basis of the conflict of interest.

- c) Alter the individual's assignment so that the products or services of the commercial interest are no longer relevant. For example, an individual with a conflict of interest regarding products for treatment of a condition could address the pathophysiology or diagnosis of the condition, rather than therapeutics.
 - d) Limit the individual's role in the CME activity to that of delivering a report without recommendations. For example, if a participating individual is funded in his or her work by a commercial company to perform research, that individual's participation in the CME activity could be limited to the presentation of data and results of the research. Another individual who is free of potential conflict regarding the subject matter could address broader implications and recommendations.
 - e) Limit the sources for recommendations. Limit an individual with a conflict of interest from selecting the evidence to be presented in the CME activity by restricting recommendations to those based on formal structured reviews of the literature with the inclusion and exclusion criteria stated (e.g., 'evidence-based'). For example, the individual could present summaries from the systematic reviews of the Cochrane Collaboration.
3. *Independently Validate the Content.* Conflict of interest may be resolved if the CME material is peer reviewed and:
- a) All recommendations involving clinical medicine are based on evidence that is accepted within the profession of medicine as adequate justification for their indications and contraindications in the care of patients.
 - b) All scientific research referred to, reported or used in CME in support or justification of patient care recommendations conforms to the generally accepted standards of experimental design, data collection and analysis.

Reporting the Resolution of the Conflict of Interest

Resolution of the conflict of interest and how it was resolved must be documented and reported to participants in the CME activity using the following statement:

AAPA has implemented a process to identify and resolve conflicts of interest that may exist which might affect the independence and fair balance of an educational activity. All planning committee members, authors and speakers were required to disclose relevant financial relationships with any commercial interest providing support for this program. Potential conflicts of interest were resolved and documented by one or more of the following methods: 1) Altering the individual's financial relationships, 2) Altering the individual's control over content; or 3) Conducting an independent validation of the individual's presentation content. Individuals who refused to or otherwise failed to disclose potential conflicts of interest to the AAPA were disqualified from participation in planning or implementing this CME activity.