

Statement on guidelines for collaboration of industry and surgical organizations in support of continuing education

The following statement was developed by the Committee on Ethics and approved by the ACS Board of Regents at its June 2008 meeting.

Collaboration between surgical organizations and the medical industry has benefited patient care in North America for many years. The primary objective of professional interactions between surgical organizations and industry should be the improvement of patient care, and such interactions should not be driven by financial or proprietary interests. Likewise, industry continues to be one source of support for continuing medical education (CME) for surgeons; however, surgical organizations must ensure that education is not influenced by collaboration with industry. These guidelines seek to provide a framework to permit corporate support of CME programs while maintaining the autonomy and impartiality of individual surgeons and surgical organizations. The guidelines are consistent with the Updated Standards for Commercial Support.*

I. Independence in planning and implementation of educational programs

A. Surgical organizations have the ultimate responsibility for the planning and development of CME programs. They must ensure that all decisions are made without any influence by commercial interests. Industry supporters of CME programs must not influence the planning, content, or implementation of an organization's CME program.

B. The organization must ensure that everyone who is in a position to influence the content of an education activity has disclosed all relevant financial relationships with any commercial interests within the last 12 months. Potential conflicts of interest must be managed through appropriate mechanisms established by the organization and disclosed in writing to the learners prior to the start of the activity.

C. All individuals who have any role that has influence over or responsibility for the development, management, presentation, or evaluation of the CME activity must disclose relevant financial relationships. Refusal to do so will preclude their participation in that role.

*Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education. ACCME Standards for Commercial Support: Standards to Ensure the Independence of CME Activities. Revised 2007. Available at: <http://www.accme.org>. Accessed December 30, 2008.

II. Commercial support for educational programs

A. The terms, conditions, and purposes of the commercial support must be documented in a written agreement between the commercial supporter and surgical organization.

B. A commercial entity must not directly pay a speaker or an individual involved with the development or implementation of the program. All commercial support must be provided to the surgical organization. Expenses for travel, accommodations, or honoraria for speakers are to be paid by the organization in compliance with its written policies and procedures. The surgical organization is responsible for all decisions regarding the disposition and disbursement of the funding. Accurate documentation detailing the receipt and expenditure of the commercial support should be maintained.

C. Industry support through educational grants should be acknowledged in a printed announcement at the meeting, but reference must not be made to any specific product. When commercial support is provided in kind, the nature of the support must also be disclosed to the learners.

D. Financial support of CME activities may also be provided through advertising and exhibit opportunities. Advertisements must not be placed in proximity to educational content and must be limited to nonscientific publications such as schedules and content descriptions. Advertisement and exhibit fees must not be combined with an educational grant.

E. No industry promotional materials are to be displayed or distributed in the same room as scientific presentations at single session meetings. In larger meetings with multiple simultaneous sessions, the access to promotional materials

must be controlled by the surgical organization in order to avoid the appearance of any connection between the distribution of promotional materials and scientific presentations.

F. Industry supporters are prohibited from use of the surgical organization's name, logo, or seal in conjunction with advertising or promotion without written permission of the organization.

G. Industry supporters must not organize any functions involving attendees that conflict with sessions of the meeting program. All industry-sponsored functions must be approved by the surgical organization prior to implementation. Industry exhibits should enhance the scientific activities of the CME program and not interfere with the scientific program.

H. For industry-sponsored symposia, a disclaimer is to appear on all printed materials, stating that the activity has no connection with the official organization's program. All proposals and printed materials developed in connection with sponsored symposia must be submitted to the organization for approval prior to publication. Such symposia must not interfere with the scientific program of the organization.

I. Representatives of industry sponsors must not engage in sales or promotional activities during sessions of the meeting program. Sales and promotional activities must be limited strictly to the exhibit floor or industry events approved by the surgical organization and will not be conducted in conjunction with CME activities.

J. If work that is supported by industry is presented, the poster, presentation, or manuscript must include an acknowledgment of the funding source.

K. Written or recorded details of the scientific program must not be reproduced without the written consent of the surgical organization.