



Conflict of Interest Resolution Process

Conflict of Interest Definition: Financial relationships* are defined by the ACCME as those relationships (personal or spouse/partner) in which the individual benefits by receiving a salary, royalty, intellectual property rights, consulting fee, honoraria, ownership interest (e.g., stocks, stock options or other ownership interest, excluding diversified mutual funds), or other financial benefit. Financial benefits are usually associated with roles such as employment, management position, independent contractor (including contracted research), consulting, and speaker's bureau/speaking and teaching, membership on advisory committees or review panels, board membership, and other activities for which remuneration is received or expected. The ACCME has not set a minimum dollar amount for relationships to be significant. Inherent in any amount is the incentive to maintain or increase the value of the relationship.

The ACCME defines a commercial as: "A commercial interest is any entity producing, marketing, re-selling, or distributing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on, patients." [Read more.](#)

***Type of relationship may include** full-time or part-time employee, independent contractor, consultant, research or other grant recipient, paid speaker or teacher, membership on advisory committee or review panels, ownership interest (product royalty/licensing fees, owning stocks, shares, etc.), board member or any other financial relationship. If an individual *does* have a financial relationship with a commercial entity producing, marketing, re-selling or distributing health-care related products or services consumed by, used on, patients, the content of their presentation will be peer-reviewed and changes *may be* requested.

AAPM will identify and resolve all potential conflicts of interests that arise from financial relationships with any commercial or proprietary entity that produces healthcare-related products and/or services relevant to the content you are planning, developing, or presenting for this activity. This includes any financial relationship within the last twelve months, as well as known financial relationships of your spouse or partner.

After a conflict has been identified, AAPM will manage or resolve this conflict according to our process on Resolving and Managing Identified Conflicts of Interest, described further below:

Process:

1. Everyone in the position to affect the content of the activity will be required to disclose. Those who do not will not be allowed to participate in the CME-accredited activity in a planner or faculty role.
2. AAPM Education and CME Oversight Committee will determine if peer review of a signed Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Attestation Form is warranted if those involved in planning or presenting content within a CE activity have financial relationships related to that content.
3. If it is determined that a planner, presenter or author has a financial relationship that creates the appearance of **or** a real conflict of interest, one or all of the following mechanisms will be used:
 - a) AAPM Education and CME Oversight Committee will ask presenter to recuse him/herself from the educational Content and another presenter or content developer will be selected.
 - b) AAPM Education and CME Oversight Committee will organize multiple levels of effective peer review to validate content prior to presentation or publication to ensure the content is valid, evidence-based and is aligned with the interest of the public. If it is a live CE presentation, the content will be submitted by the presenter at least 3 weeks in advance of the presentation release date so that it can undergo an effective peer review process.

- c) Presenters, authors, planners and reviewers will be instructed to present evidence-based medicine with data to support the content.
- d) AAPM Education and CME Oversight Committee will change the presenter's role in the content therefore minimizing her/his ability to influence content by assigning the presenter an area of content that is unrelated to the area of conflict or excusing the individual from their obligation to participate in the activity.
- e) In cases where a presenter has disclosed a conflict, it is managed and the presenter allowed to participate, all financial relationships will be disclosed prior to an activity to alert participants (audience, readers) of the potential for conflict of interest and commercial bias.
- f) In cases where a presenter who has disclosed a conflict is allowed to participate, the presentation will be delivered with several other presentations offering information on drug therapies to balance out the presentation as a whole. A situation like this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- g) Faculty with identified relevant conflicts are encouraged to consider free training on Conflicts of Interest available at: <http://www.nfeinitiative.org/>
- h) Participants will be asked to evaluate the objectivity of the presentation or publication, and to identify any perceived commercial bias. This information will be used to determine if the presenter will be asked to participate as faculty in future CE presentations.

This policy on full disclosure is designed to permit AAPM to provide continuing medical education (CME) without undue influence by any individuals or groups associated with these CE activities. It is recognized that faculty and staff may enter financial or other materially beneficial relationships with commercial organizations. However, it is important that CE content be based on learner needs and not be biased by commercial or marketing interests.

The ACCME considers financial relationships to create actual conflicts of interest in CE when individuals have both a financial relationship with a commercial interest that occurred within the past 12 months and the opportunity to affect the content of CE about the products or services of that commercial interest. (These types of relationships are relevant.)

Bias in CE activities may include overstating the performance of a company's product, omitting information about products of competing companies, or, more subtly, simply emphasizing a company's product so that the CE participants become most familiar with it.

Although a conflict of interest may create the potential to bias a presentation, it is accepted that most professionals associated with CE do not knowingly bias information. They recognize the conflicts of interest and put their reputations, their institutions reputations, and their position of trust ahead of personal gain that could result from their relationships with a commercial organization.

In medical and academic communities, there is an increasing concern that commercial relationships may change an individual's presentation without the presenter recognizing the bias. Hence, the appearance of bias is an equally important concern, as the mere appearance of a conflict of interest may cast doubt on the objectivity of a presentation and undermine public trust. Full disclosure of conflicting or potentially conflicting interest is considered the primary and usual means to protect the integrity of AAPM CE activities. Therefore, it is necessary at times to take disclosure one step further. For these reasons in order to meet the requirements of the *2004 Updated Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) Standards for Commercial Support: Standards to Ensure the Independence of CME Activities*, AAPM enacts the following guiding principle.

Guiding Principle:

The perception of a conflict of interest is as important as an actual conflict. Any relationship that exists between an individual and a commercial organization that suggests or implies a financial or contractual relationship or one that if brought to public attention would in any way diminish the reputation of the individual, AAPM, or the commercial organization must be reported to AAPM Education and CME Oversight Committee during the initial planning stages of the activity. This conflict must also be reported to the audience participating in the CME activity.

Generally, an individual who is in the position to control the content of a CE and reports a relationship with industry as defined by the ACCME definition of a financial relationship will not be allowed to present a CE activity such as a symposium, workshop, webinar, poster or paper.

An individual who refuses to disclose relevant financial relationships will be disqualified and cannot have control of, or responsibility for, the development, management, presentation, or evaluation of the CE activity.

Individuals considered to be a “Ghost writer” or “Ghost presenter” will be not be permitted.

Recusal shall be required when it appears that a member of the AAPM Education and CME Oversight Committee will be unable to fairly judge a potential conflict raised by a disclosure statement. All such potential conflicts of interest of committee members must be disclosed to the committee in advance of the proceedings, and the committee will vote to determine whether recusal is required.

By serving in a planner or faculty role in an AAPM educational activity, planners and faculty attest to understanding these guidelines.

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