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## Guidelines on Physician Interaction with Industry

This document is a physician **guideline** approved by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia.

**Guidelines** contain recommendations endorsed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. The College encourages its members to be familiar with and to follow its **guidelines** whenever possible and appropriate. Note that **guidelines** may contain references to College **standards**.

### Definitions

The term “Industry” as used in this document describes businesses or individuals that manufacture, distribute, provide, or sell the following:

- 1) Prescription or non-prescription pharmaceuticals and biological preparations
- 2) Medical devices, including diagnostic tests and/or testing devices
- 3) Healthcare-related software or information technology (IT) products intended for patients
- 4) Patient services that are not publicly insured in Nova Scotia

### Principles

Physicians are expected to exercise independent professional judgment when dealing with patients. They must avoid situations in which their interaction with industry may compromise or appear to compromise that judgment. Real or perceived conflict of interest on the part of physicians can compromise the reputation of the medical profession.

The College recognizes that industry plays an important and legitimate role in many physicians’ continuous professional development and/or research. The College does not intend this policy to discourage any such activities provided they do not entail a real or perceived conflict of interest.

## Guidelines

### Gifts to Physicians

Physicians may not accept gifts from industry unless such gifts offer direct or indirect benefit to patients. Books, educational materials, and production samples may be accepted. Promotional items such as pens, note pads, carry bags, and branded clothing do not benefit patients and should be declined. Physicians may not accept gifts that are of substantial value or involve explicit or implied conditions. Unacceptable gifts include those given in relation to:

- Prescribing practices.
- Inclusion of drugs on formularies.
- The use of a test, procedure, or other health care product or service.
- Participation in any political or lobbying activity that may advance a pharmaceutical company's interests.

### Continuing Medical Education

- 1) When industry interests sponsor all or part of conferences, meetings or dinners, physicians must consider whether these gatherings are primarily intended to promote educational activities, as opposed to marketing.
- 2) The method of selection of the subject and speakers must be made clear to everyone attending these meetings.
- 3) Physicians should avoid educational functions that are not organized through an arm's length body responsible for the conduct and content of the function and not directly controlled by industry sponsors.
- 4) Physicians should avoid functions in which industry sponsors may unduly influence the selection of speakers, agenda, or topics.
- 5) Physicians should avoid functions where there is concern that attempts will be made to influence or suppress attendees' dissenting opinions.
- 6) Direct subsidies from industry to compensate for the physician's time or to cover the costs of travel, lodging or other personal expenses of physicians attending conferences are unacceptable. An exception exists for physicians who are making a presentation or in some other way serving as faculty at that conference or meeting, or providing genuine consulting services in relation to it.
- 7) Subsidies for meals and other modest hospitality or social events held as part of a conference or meeting are acceptable.

## Research and Advisory Arrangements

- 1) Token consulting or advisory arrangements, or participation in "market research" may not be used to justify the compensation of physicians for their time and/or expenses.
- 2) Physicians must not participate in any industry-sponsored research activities without first confirming that the appropriate ethics committee has provided formal approval.
- 3) Before participating in any industry-sponsored research activities, physicians must make appropriate inquiries to be assured that any research or clinical trial proposed has a valid scientific and ethical framework, with a clear objective, and is not a marketing technique or part thereof.
- 4) Physicians who accept honoraria, research grants, or placement on industry speakers' bureaus should disclose all such connections whenever they speak at symposia or scientific meetings, or make any public statements on subjects related to the companies' products.
- 5) It is not acceptable under any circumstances for physicians to publish under their own name anything that has been written in whole or in part by the employees, agents or researchers of a pharmaceutical or health technology company. Under no circumstances may physicians allow their professional reputations to be exploited to extend an aura of respectability to research they did not undertake or articles they did not write.
- 6) It is not acceptable under any circumstances for physicians to participate in industry-sponsored research activity where the terms restrict in any way the public presentation of the actual results of the research.

## Medical Trainees

Meetings between pharmaceutical company representatives and medical trainees must be arranged in advance with senior staff and in compliance with the above guidelines.

## **Further Reading and Acknowledgements**

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia: *Guidelines Regarding Conflict of Interest*

The College thanks the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (CPSM) for allowing sections of its publication entitled *Conflict of Interest: Relationship with the Pharmaceutical Industry* to be adapted in the preparation of this document. The CPSM document refers in part to the 2001 Canadian Medical Association document entitled *Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry*.

## Document History

Approved by Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia: **October 18, 2013**

Approximate date of next review: **October 2018**

This document replaces the 2001 Canadian Medical Association document entitled *Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry* as the College's approved guideline on physician interaction with the healthcare industry.

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