

# **Society of Rural Physicians of Canada**

# **Société de la médecine rurale du Canada**

## **Policy on Financial Sponsorship and the SRPC**

### **October 1998**

#### **1) General Principles.**

- a) The primary objective of professional interactions between the SRPC and industry should be the advancement of the health of rural Canadians rather than the private good of either the SRPC or industry.
- b) The relationship of the SRPC and industry must always be in keeping with the fundamental ethical principles that govern social interactions in general.
- c) The SRPC will not enter into any agreement between an industry and itself that would be in conflict of interest with the good of rural Canadians. More specifically the SRPC will not endorse any product or service in return for fee or other consideration where such a relationship might jeopardize its ability to exercise its autonomy, independence and commitment to the scientific method.
- d) Where industry sponsorship exists it must be disclosed.
- e) All physicians acting on behalf of the SRPC will abide by the Canadian Medical Association code of ethics in their dealings with industry sponsorship.

#### **2) Research**

- a) A prerequisite for SRPC participation in industry sponsored research activities is evidence that these activities are ethically defensible, socially responsible and scientifically valid.
- b) Such research should have a formal approval by an appropriate ethics review body. Such research should be conducted according to the guidelines of the Medical Research Council of Canada.

#### **3) Continuing Medical Education**

- a) The SRPC distinguishes between education, training and product promotion. Above all, CME activities should address the educational needs of the targeted medical audience
- b) The ultimate decision on the organization, content and choice of CME activities shall lie in the hands of the physician-organizers.

- c) CME organizers must not be in a position of conflict of interest by virtue of any relationship with the company or companies those fund CME activities.
- d) The ultimate decision on funding arrangements for CME activities should be the responsibility of the physician-organizers. Although the CME program may acknowledge the financial or other aid received it should not identify the products of the Company or companies that fund the activities.
- e) All funds from a commercial source should be in the form of educational grant payable to the institution or organizations sponsoring the CME activity; the physician-organizers should be prepared to present statement of account connectivity to the funding organizations or other relevant parties.
- f) Generic names should be used rather than trade names in the course of CME activities. In particular, physicians should not engage in *peer selling*\*. If specific products or services are mentioned, there should be a balanced presentation of the prevailing body of scientific information on the product or service and of reasonable, alternative treatment options. If unapproved uses of a product or service are discussed, presenters must inform the audience of this fact.
- g) Negotiations for space or for types of promotional displays at CME functions should not be influenced by industry sponsorship of the activity.
- h) Travel and accommodation arrangements, social events and menus for industry sponsored CME activities should be in keeping with their arrangements that would normally be made without industry sponsorship. For example, the industry sponsorship must not pay for travel or lodging costs or other personal expenses of physicians attending the CME event. Subsidies for hospitality should not be accepted outside of modest meals for social events that are held as part of a conference or meeting. However, faculty at CME events may accept reasonable honoraria and reimbursement for travel, lodging and meal expenses. Scholarships or other special funds to permit medical students, residents and fellows to attend educational events permissible as long as a selection of participants for these funds is made by their academic institution.
- i) The content of CME activities must not be directed by involvement of industry sponsors. More specifically the CME content will not be chosen because of its ability to attract sponsorship.

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\* Peer selling occurs when an industry directly sponsors a seminar or similar event that focuses on its own products is designed to enhance sales of those products. Physicians presenting in such programs are therefore agents of the industry rather than educators.