



Sponsorship and industry engagement - Member policy

1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

Evidence shows that health care decision-making and the conduct of research can be affected by multiple influences in ways not always beneficial to the wider community. This policy provides a framework for members of the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) who engage in sponsorship or other financial arrangements with commercial entities and to manage these engagements in an ethical and transparent manner.

2. SCOPE & PRINCIPLES

This policy outlines an approach for Fellows and trainees to consider their own interactions and engagements with industry and other entities in which a transactional component applies.

This policy complements and extends upon the ACD Code of Ethics. ACD acknowledges that individuals are free to choose the degree to which they engage with other entities. This policy is intended to reinforce standards and expectations of conduct associated with membership of the College and the medical profession with respect to industry engagement.

This policy applies to individual ACD Fellows and trainees. It does not apply to sponsorship arrangements entered into by ACD at the organisational level.

3. DEFINITIONS / KEY WORDS / ABBREVIATIONS

Interest: a commitment, goal, obligation or value associated with a social relationship or practice. In healthcare the safety and welfare of patients is the primary interest, although not sole obligation or interest of health care professionals.

Duality: the coexistence of two distinct interests in a particular decision-making setting.

Conflicts of interest: a situation in which two conflicting interests are acting in a social relationship or practice.

Industry: commercial entity involved in the development, manufacture, sales, marketing, distribution or user support of products and services used or prescribed by Fellows. This includes but is not limited to pharmaceutical and therapeutic/medical devices, E-health and medical software, indemnity, or other related products and services.

Sponsor: an entity or group that provides support to an event, activity or cause, either financially or through the provision of resources, presenters, products or services. In providing support the sponsor may seek to target or influence a particular audience.

Sponsorship: a negotiated agreement between an individual and a sponsor, where the individual receives payment for participation in sponsored activities, events or on communication platforms.

Sponsorship agreement: a document signed by the sponsor and the individual detailing scope, costs and timeframe of sponsorship activities.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

- a) Individual members of the College are free to engage with commercial or non-commercial entities offering sponsorship or monetary engagement to support a particular cause, event, program or activity. Individuals are accountable to ACD's Code of Ethics and must comply with relevant legislation including the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Therapeutic Goods Act.
- b) The safety and interests of patients should be the primary concerns of dermatologists and trainees. In health care decisions, the safety and wellbeing of patients and population groups should take priority over commercial, financial, personal or other interests.
- c) In making decisions surrounding sponsorship arrangements or receipt of payment, goods or services, Fellows and trainees should consider the following principles:
 - Shared vision or goals
 - Ethical and moral elements of such an arrangement
 - Real or perceived risks of influence or interference in treatment decision-making, prescribing practices or educational content
 - Mutual trust, transparency and accountability
 - Respect for differences e.g. knowledge, experience, resources
 - Mechanisms to manage potential conflicts of interest
 - Agreement to dissolve partnership in accordance with the defined arrangement
- d) Fellows and trainees should develop awareness of all their interests both pecuniary and non-pecuniary. When entering into sponsorship arrangements, an individual and the sponsor will declare interests involved to identify dualities and conflicts, to develop ways of averting or managing actual conflicts, and to communicate openly with each party. Where the possibility of a conflict of interest arises, regardless of the context, this must be declared openly to all relevant parties.
- e) The nature of any industry engagement, sponsorship or support and any associated obligations should be declared openly by Fellows and trainees to those who might have an interest in knowing, including patients and the public. This includes relationships with producers and suppliers and any benefits obtained from product sales.

- f) Fellows and trainees involved in research (i.e. as investigators) should disclose competing interests to all relevant parties, including participants and the public. Research grants from industry should in general be made to the institution rather than individuals and should be acknowledged on publication. Researchers should not be subject to confidentiality agreements that are not time-limited or may prevent public disclosure of trial results. There should be a commitment to make all results, both positive and negative, publically available.
- g) Meetings organised directly by industry should be recognised as promotional. Where possible, industry support for scientific meetings should be organised through independent bodies. Fellows and trainees should be aware that industry may have a part in determining the speakers, subject or content and that this should be disclosed. Fellows and trainees should publicly declare relevant interests when speaking at such meetings.
- h) Fellows and trainees who accept industry support to attend conferences should make the necessary public declarations and be aware of the potential for such acceptance to influence their practice or be perceived as such. Ideally this support should be made available through a fund that is independently managed by a third party, such as an organising committee. Fellows and trainees should not accept sponsorship to cover the cost of travel or attendance for family or friends.
- i) Wherever possible, Departmental meetings should be funded by attendees or other organisation sources. Where this is not possible, industry will have no part in determining speakers, subject or content, nor will they attempt to influence or interfere outcomes.
- j) Teaching and educational materials developed by industry should be identified as promotional and not include product placement.
- k) For remunerated consultancy such as industry advisory boards, membership should be disclosed in all relevant circumstances and recognised as a source of conflict of interest.
- l) For industry-led patient education and support programs, patients should be invited to participate or provided with information about such programs only if they provide meaningful benefits and if the information provided is accurate and appropriate. Fellows and trainees should not facilitate direct contact between industry representatives and patients.
- m) Fellows using software for clinical functions should consider programs that do not include industry advertising or should disable the advertising functions of their programs.
- n) The use of samples provided by industry may not always be in the best interests of patients. Fellows and trainees are encouraged to consider their value on an individual basis.
- o) The acceptance of industry hospitality can create conflicts of interest. For the most part, hospitality costs should be provided by employers or by Fellows and trainees themselves. Where this is not possible, hospitality costs should be within reasonable limits, and disclosed.

- p) Fellows and trainees working in overseas settings should carefully scrutinise their relationships with the various components of industry with which they engage and clarify the purposes and practices associated with their activities.
- q) Acceptance of gifts, including service-oriented and non-service oriented gifts and items of small value, is discouraged. Individuals should consider the context, potential implications and available alternatives before deciding on their personal courses of action.
- r) Fellows and trainees should not endorse specific products on behalf of industry and declare conflicts of interest. Generic medications and scientific publications should form the basis of media and marketing materials, guidelines and patient information leaflets.

5. APPROVAL AUTHORITIES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

The following authorities are delegated under this policy:

Policy	Approve new policy and major amendment		Approve minor amendments	
	Authority	Reporting Requirements	Authority	Reporting Requirements
Sponsorship	Board	Annual	DCEO	Annual

CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

Policy Number :	MEM005
Approval Authority:	Board
Responsible Officer:	DCEO
Designated Officer:	Membership and Marketing Manager
First approved:	8 May 2021
Effective Start date	11 May 2021
Review date	11 May 2023

HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1	8 May 2021	Board approved

RELATED DOCUMENTS

CVA decision criteria

Medicines Australia Code of Conduct

RACP guidelines for ethical relationships between health professionals and industry

Sponsorship Policy – Managerial Policy