

ACCF Mechanisms for Resolving Conflicts of Interest

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) requires all accredited providers of CME to have a mechanism in place for identifying and resolving potential conflicts of interest (COI) prior to the educational offering. The ACCME defines “conflict of interest” as follows: *“When an individual has an opportunity to affect CME content about products or services of a commercial interest with which he/she has a financial relationship.”*

The American College of Cardiology Foundation (ACCF) has approved the following as a list of potential resolution mechanisms for resolving COI. Resolution mechanisms will vary depending on the nature of the financial relationship; ACCF staff will notify contributors of the mechanism selected for their activity:

Please Note:

- Mechanisms #1-3 will automatically apply to participation in all ACCF credit bearing activities;
- Mechanisms # 10-12 will automatically apply to participation in committee activities involving continuing education
- College staff will advise contributors if any additional strategies are recommended:

ACCF'S LIST OF OPTIONS FOR RESOLVING COI

For CME/CE Activities:

1. ***Signed Attestation:*** By completing and signing the Attestation Section of the Disclosure Form, the contributor agrees that said conflicts or relationships will not bias or otherwise influence their involvement in the CME activity, practice recommendations will be limited to those based on the best available evidence (or absence of evidence), and recommendations will be consistent with generally accepted medical practice. They also agree to all other mandatory ACCME disclosure guidelines.
2. ***Audience Evaluation:*** Attendees will be advised of their right to expect non-biased presentations, and queried regarding their impressions concerning bias (or the absence of bias) within the activity. Activity Directors and teachers/authors will receive copies of the evaluation summaries and comments.
3. ***Speaker Disclosure Slide*** – Presenters will be required to show a disclosure slide to the audience at the beginning of their presentation (please see acc.org for a speaker slide template)
4. ***Follow-up Phone Call:*** CME Committee identifies someone to follow-up with contributor by phone to discuss ways to avoid perception of bias due to disclosed relationships. CME staff sends follow-up letter to document resolution.
5. ***Altering control over content:*** An individual’s control of CME content can be altered to remove the opportunity to affect content related to the products/services of a commercial interest. For example:
 - a. ***Select someone else to control that part of the content*** - If a proposed teacher/author has a conflict of interest related to the content, choose someone else who does not have a relationship to the commercial interests related to the content.
 - b. ***Change the content of the person’s assignment*** - The role of a person with a conflict of interest can be changed within the CME activity so that he/she is no longer teaching about issues relevant to the products/services of the commercial interest. For example, an individual with a conflict of interest regarding products for treatment of a disease state could address the pathophysiology or diagnosis of the disease rather than the therapeutics.

c. Limit the content to a report without recommendations - If an individual has been funded by a commercial company to perform research, the individual's presentation may be limited to the data and results of the research. Someone else can be assigned to address broader implications and recommendations.

d. Limit the sources for recommendations to those based on best available evidence - Rather than having a person with a conflict of interest present personal recommendations or personally select the evidence to be presented, limit the role of the person to reporting recommendations based on formal structured reviews of the literature with the inclusion and exclusion criteria stated (evidence-based). For example, the individual could present summaries from the systematic reviews of a peer reviewed source, e.g. the Cochrane Collaboration (www.cochrane.org).

6. **Peer Audit and Evaluation:** an informed peer or member of the planning committee will be present, to evaluate the CME activity. This evaluator will be asked to complete a formal, detailed evaluation to measure any bias in the activity.
7. **Peer Review of Content:** The CME Committee designates a committee representative or the Activity Director to review the content of the slides prior to the presentation. The peer reviewer will be asked to complete a formal evaluation to measure whether any bias was in the presentation and, if so, what resolution mechanism was provided to the contributor. Reviewer must also measure whether the resolution was adhered during the presentation.
8. **Altering financial relationships** - contributor's relationship with commercial interest has changed or discontinued, and in doing so, no duty remains to introduce bias into the content. Although not relevant to COI, relationship must be disclosed to learners for 12 months.
9. **Elimination:** Contributors who are perceived as either manifesting conflicts of interest or being biased may be eliminated from consideration as resources (committee members, teachers, authors, etc.) in subsequent certified CME activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOLUTION MECHANISM FOR CME/CE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ONLY

10. **Signed Annual Statement** -- By completing and signing the Annual Statement, the committee member agrees to recuse him/herself from the discussion and vote on the relevant submitted activity
11. **Relationship with Industry Statement** -- This statement will be read at the beginning of each committee meeting. It reminds members of the College policy to have member recuse him/herself from discussion and vote on possible conflict of interest items.
12. **Disclosure to Peers and Activity Audience** - Committee disclosure information will be shared with peers and any relevant activity audiences.