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# American College of Cardiology

## Position Statement

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### American College of Cardiology/Industry Relations

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The American College of Cardiology (ACC) maintains a long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship with industry which has resulted in enhanced educational benefits to members and non-members, without compromising the College's ethical and educational standards. Prompted by growing concerns regarding industry/medical society relationships, however, the College has developed guidelines for advising members, committees, boards and industry on the nature of future ACC/industry relations.

The following statement by ACC conforms to the statements and opinions issued on this subject by the American Medical Association (AMA), the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA), the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) and the College's own Bethesda Conference Report on Ethics. (Copies of the AMA, PMA and ACCME Guidelines are attached.) The College accepts, upholds and endorses these related guidelines with respect to physician and CME sponsor relationships with industry. The purpose of this advisory statement is to build upon the foundation of these guidelines and to provide guidance and clarification for specific issues that pertain to the College and its industry relationships. For purposes of this statement, "industry" refers to all pharmaceutical firms, medical devices, equipment and supply firms and other for-profit organizations from which the College may accept grant support.

**Objectivity.** Generating and disseminating unbiased and objective scientific information is the cornerstone of the educational agenda of the College. While industry support of programs, products and services is constructive and appreciated, such support must be absolutely unconditional with regard to objectivity. Therefore, the College is solely responsible for the development, faculty selection, review, editorial control, and content of all programs, products, and services.

**Sole-Support Versus Multi-Support.** Whenever possible and feasible, the College seeks funding for educational events from a variety of supporters. It is understood, however, that occasions may arise where sole-support of a specific event, publication or service is appropriate. Special caution is taken to ensure that in instances when single support is granted, no perception of a conflict of interest exists and any acknowledgment of the support is in good taste. In all cases, the College will fully disclose industry support for College activities.

**Awards.** All awards and award programs, whether educational, scientific, or travel related, are based on merit, competition and/or criteria established by the College. Such programs may be supported by one or more companies as long as the supporter has no involvement or input in the selection criteria or selection of the award recipients, and no obligation is imposed on or implied of the recipient of the funds.

**Fellows-in-training.** Industry support for the educational activities of fellows-in-training is encouraged. For example, the College seeks means which afford fellows-in-training enhanced opportunities for attending the College's educational programs. The selection of the participating fellows is the responsibility of the College and/or the fellow's training institution. Industry support should in no way impose or imply an obligation to the industry supporter.

**Industry Recognition Via Advertising.** The College acknowledges that appropriate appreciation and visible recognition should be afforded to industry in return for their support of educational activities. Corporate versus product-specific advertising may conceivably offer an advantage to the College by distancing it from commercialization. From an industry standpoint, however, product-specific advertising is generally preferred. Providing that the product specific advertising is in good taste, objective, and well balanced, the College allows its use on its supported publications, such as Cardiology, Annual Scientific Session News, etc. The College reserves the right to approve each advertisement and its placement prior to its insertion into the publication and must preview any changes to future advertisements.

**Table-Top Exhibits.** In addition to the College's annual Exposition, select education programs afford industry the opportunity to present table-top exhibits. These exhibits are particularly desirable in programs of a technical nature, where equipment or devices may be displayed. The decision to hold table-top exhibits is at the discretion of individual program directors, in accordance with procedures and policies established by the appropriate College committees, (e.g. Extramural Programs and Learning Center Committees) and these ACC guidelines. In instances where table-top exhibits are permitted, the College seeks representation by several companies.

**Dissemination of ACC-Generated Information and Products by Industry Representatives.** Although not a standard practice, the College recognizes that its members and other members of the medical profession may benefit from the use of industry representatives to disseminate information or products to its members. In particular, there may be instances where ACC members would benefit from the dissemination of information or services, for which cost or

distance prohibit the College from disseminating the same. For instance, the College's ability to disseminate information in an international marketplace, may, at times, necessitate the use of industry representatives. Because of the possible appearance of commercialization and desire to be sensitive to ACC members, these instances are considered on an individual basis by the Executive Committee.

**Industry-initiated Activities.** The College realizes and welcomes the fact that from time to time industry may propose innovative programs which fill a need of the membership. On such occasions, after conducting a marketing assessment and reviewing the recommendations of the appropriate committees, the College may accept the industry- initiative and produce such programs or services, but maintains full control over their content. Industry initiated activities should offer an incremental educational or otherwise beneficial advantage to the College membership and must be within the realm of the ACC's mission statement and goals.

**Industry Support for Non-Educational Activities.** On limited occasions, the College may find it necessary and appropriate to solicit and accept the support of industry in underwriting specific activities which are not of an educational nature, but are complementary to the College's objectives (e.g. job placement service, message center). With regard to social events, the College accepts industry support for a limited number of such events when they occur in conjunction with College educational activities. However, in the case of the Annual Scientific Session, the College solicits/accepts no industry support for activities or programs which are primarily social in nature. All non-educational and social activities are considered on an individual basis by the Executive Committee with advice from the Ethics Committee, with the College affording appropriate recognition to the supporter.

**Industry Representation and Comment on College Issues.** The College acknowledges that there are occasions when industry comment is appropriate and desirable, particularly where industry can provide medical technology expertise (e.g. industry comment may be requested for Bethesda Conferences, practice guidelines, technology assessments). Recognizing that more than a single leading manufacturer may exist, the College carefully selects from among them when considering invitations. In cases where industry representation at a meeting or event is appropriate: 1 ) the number of representatives that attend may be limited, 2) and all product-specific advertising is prohibited.

**ACC Chapters.** The National ACC office acknowledges that industry support will be solicited and encouraged at the Chapter level. The National ACC strongly encourages ACC Chapters to adopt these national guidelines as well.

**Exploring Avenues of Future Cooperation.** The College believes that industry recognizes that a harmonious exchange must exist between the two parties allowing both to prosper and serve their respective objectives. As concerns are growing from the educational side with respect to overcommercialization by industry, similar concerns are becoming as prominent from the side

of the industry toward professional societies. There seems to be a perception by industry that they are being asked increasingly to contribute substantial funds, while receiving decreasing evidence of long- or short-term benefits. Given such concerns, this represents an opportune time for increasing the ACC/industry dialogue, giving further consideration to mutually beneficial activities. Some of these might include further development of programs to benefit fellows, post-graduate training opportunities for the practicing cardiovascular specialist and clinical research activities. The College, therefore, initiates and encourages this open dialogue.