



American College of Preventive Medicine
physicians dedicated to prevention

ACPM POLICY ON CORPORATE RELATIONSHIPS

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9.1 Overview of Principles

The American College of Preventive Medicine's principles to guide corporate relationships have been organized into the following categories: General Principles that apply to most situations; Special Guidelines that deal with specific issues and concerns; and Organizational Review that outlines approval authorities and public disclosure responsibilities. These guidelines should be reviewed over time to assure their continued relevance to the policies and operations of ACPM and to the current business environment. The principles should serve as a starting point for anyone reviewing or developing ACPM's relationships with outside groups.

9.2 General Principles

ACPM's mission statement should provide guidance for externally funded relationships. Relations that are not motivated by the association's mission threaten the ACPM's ability to provide representation and leadership for the profession.

9.2.1 ACPM's vision and values must drive the proposed activity

ACPM's vision and values ultimately must determine whether a proposed relationship is appropriate for ACPM. ACPM should not have relationships with organizations or industries whose principles, policies or actions obviously conflict with ACPM's vision and values. For example, relationships with producers of products that harm the public health (e.g., tobacco) are not appropriate for ACPM. In general, rather than responding to others, ACPM will proactively choose its priorities for external relationships and participate in those that fulfill these priorities.

9.2.2 The relationship must preserve or promote trust in ACPM and the preventive medicine profession.

To be effective, preventive medicine professionalism requires the public's trust. Corporate relationships that could undermine the public's trust in ACPM or the profession are not acceptable. For example, no relationship should raise questions about the scientific content of ACPM's health information efforts, ACPM's advocacy on public health issues, or the truthfulness of its public statements.

9.2.3 The relationship must maintain ACPM's objectivity with respect to health issues.

ACPM will accept funds or royalties from external organizations only if acceptance does not pose a conflict of interest and in no way impacts the objectivity of the association, its members, activities, programs or employees. For example, exclusive relationships with manufacturers of health-related products marketed to the public could impair ACPM's objectivity in promoting the health of the nation. Relationships that might bias, or appear to bias, ACPM's objectivity with respect to health issues are not acceptable.

9.2.4 The activity must provide benefit to the public's health, patient's care, or physician's practice of preventive medicine.

Public education campaigns and programs for ACPM members are potentially of significant benefit. Corporate-supported programs that provide financial benefits to ACPM but no significant benefit to the public or direct professional benefits to ACPM or ACPM's members require careful scrutiny. In the case of member benefits, external relations should advance professionalism or be neutral to it.

9.3 Special Guidelines

The following guidelines address a number of special situations where ACPM cannot utilize external funding.

9.3.1 ACPM will provide health and medical information, but should not involve itself in the production, sale or marketing to consumers of products that claim a health benefit.

Marketing health-related products (e.g., pharmaceuticals, home health care products) undermines ACPM's objectivity and diminishes its role in representing preventive medicine values and educating the public about their health and health care.

9.3.2 Activities should be funded from multiple sources wherever possible.

Activities funded from a single external source are at greater risk for inappropriate influence from the supporter—or the perception of it, which may be equally damaging. For example, funding for a patient education brochure should be done with multiple sponsors if possible. For the purposes of this guideline, funding from several companies, but each from a different and non-competing industry category (e.g., one pharmaceutical manufacturer and one health insurance provider) does not constitute multiple-source funding. ACPM recognizes that for some activities the benefits may be so great, the harms so minimal, and prospects for developing multiple sources of funding so unlikely that single-source funding is a reasonable option. Even so, funding exclusivity must be limited to discrete programs only (e.g., tobacco conference) and shall not extend to a broad category (e.g., tobacco). The Board should review single-sponsor activities prior to implementation to ensure that (a) reasonable attempts have been made to locate additional sources of funds (for example, issuing an open request for proposals to companies in the category); and (b) the expected benefits of the project merit the additional risk to ACPM of accepting single-source funding. In all cases of single-source funding, ACPM will guard against conflict of interest.

9.3.3 The relationship must preserve ACPM's control over any projects and products bearing the ACPM name or logo. ACPM retains editorial control over any information produced as part of a corporate/externally funded arrangement.

When an ACPM program receives external financial support, ACPM must remain in control of its entire content, and must approve all marketing materials to ensure that the message is congruent with ACPM's vision and values. A statement regarding ACPM editorial control as well as the name(s) of the program's supporter(s) must appear in all public materials describing the program and in all educational materials produced by the program. (This principle is intended to apply only to those situations where an outside entity requests ACPM to put its name on products produced by the outside entity, and not to those situations where ACPM only licenses its own products for use in conjunction with another entity's products.)

9.3.4 Relationships must not permit or encourage influence by the corporate partner on ACPM.

An ACPM corporate relationship should not permit influence by the corporate partner on ACPM policies, priorities, and actions. For example, agreements stipulating access by corporate partners to the Board of Regents would be of concern. Additionally, relationships that appear to be acceptable alone may become unacceptable when viewed in light of other existing or proposed activities.

9.3.5 Participation in a sponsorship program does not imply ACPM's endorsement of an entity or its policies.

Participation in sponsorship of an ACPM program does not imply ACPM approval of that corporation's general policies, nor does it imply that ACPM will exert any influence to advance the corporation's interests outside the substance of the arrangement itself. ACPM's name and logo should not be used in a manner that would express or imply an ACPM endorsement of the corporation or its policies.

9.3.6 To remove any appearance of undue influence on the affairs of ACPM, ACPM should not depend on funding from corporate relations for core governance activities.

Funding for core governance activities from corporate sponsors (i.e., financial support for conduct of the Board of Regents or Executive Committee) could make ACPM become dependent on external funding for its existence or could allow a supporter, or group or supporters, to have undue influence on the affairs of ACPM. Some specific sponsors may make it possible to convene committee meetings – however this is unacceptable for the Board and Executive Committee meetings.

9.3.7 Funds from corporate relations must not be used to support political advocacy activities.

A full and effective separation should exist between political activities and corporate funding. ACPM should not advocate for a particular issue because it has received funding from an interested corporation. Public concern would be heightened if it appeared that ACPM's advocacy agenda was influenced by corporate funding.

9.4 Organizational Review

The Board of Regents must screen every proposal for an ACPM corporate relationship prior to staff implementation.

9.4.1 It is important for ACPM to have an orderly and predictable reporting process to the membership and for disclosure to others as appropriate.

All ACPM corporate arrangements will be annually reported to the membership in the Winter issue of the ACPM News.

9.4.2 The Board of Regents must approve all proposals for ACPM corporate relationships.

Every new relationship must be approved by the Board of Regents, or through a procedure adopted by the Board.

9.4.3 The Executive Director is responsible for the review and implementation of each specific arrangement according to the previously described principles.

The Executive Director is responsible for obtaining the Board of Regents' authorization for externally funded arrangements that have an economic and/or policy impact on ACPM. The Executive Director is responsible for implementing the activity in a manner that is consistent with the principles contained in this document.