

Healthcare Congress Alliance

The Liaison Working Group in the Healthcare Congress Industry

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 3

New Rules and Guidelines for Companies in the Healthcare Industry

The future of support for International congresses

In the rapidly changing world of rules, regulations and guidelines which affect global healthcare congresses, there have recently been a number of significant developments. Just as they have in the past, the US and Europe are taking differing approaches but often as not ending up with similar outcomes. Both use a combination of governmental and self-regulation to achieve this.

There is one important factor to bear in mind and this is that Europe is made up of 25 independent states with their own independent views on how healthcare meetings should be regulated. The US, on the other hand, is a unified country with a more highly centralised legal system.

In the US...

The PhRMA Code, (the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America "Code on Interactions with Healthcare Professionals"), adopted in July 2002, is the voluntary code developed by the pharmaceutical industry to govern healthcare marketing practices. According to PhRMA, the goal of the code is "to reinforce our intention that our interactions with healthcare professionals are to benefit patients and to enhance the practice of medicine". Similar in some respects to a voluntary code for physicians issued by the American Medical Association in 1990, the PhRMA Code reaffirmed that industry support for CME meetings is permissible as long as the funding is directed to the convention planner and not the doctors themselves and, moreover, as long as the support does not influence the content of the education. In addition, the Code states that financial support for meals or receptions is acceptable as long as they are "modest" and "conducive to discussion among faculty and attendees".

The medical device industry followed suit when the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed) released its own "Code of Ethics on Interactions with Health Care Professionals". The final version of the AdvaMed Code, issued in September 2003, covers many of the same issues as the PhRMA Code, but retains a few important differences to reflect the unique interaction

between medical device firms and healthcare professionals, given that device firms often have to work more closely with physicians to teach them how to use their products. Both the AdvaMed and PhRMA Codes contain specific language about Industry not paying for meals, hospitality, travel etc. for spouses or guests of healthcare professionals who do not have a bona fide professional interest in the information being shared at the meeting.

The US Federal Government became involved when the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Health and Human Services released, in April 2003, the final version of its "Compliance Program Guidance for Pharmaceutical Manufacturers" (medical device manufacturers are also included in this guidance document). OIG stated that this guidance is "a major initiative of the OIG in its effort to engage the healthcare community in preventing and reducing fraud and abuse in federal healthcare programs".

And in Europe...

For more than 10 years, the governments of both Italy and France have had strict limitations on expenditure by the Healthcare Industry on the sponsorship of physicians to both domestic and international medical meetings including restrictions on hospitality and meals.

In February 2004 the majority of internationally active pharmaceutical companies operating in Germany founded the "Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle für die Arzneimittelindustrie e.V." The member companies of this Association have committed themselves to bring their individual marketing practices into line with the Association Code. With this code the German Pharmaceutical Industry intends to contain the escalating costs associated with supporting physicians to attend medical meetings. Support will be adequate but controlled. This is especially important in a climate where both the federal government and public authorities are increasing their vigilance in this area.

Recently the Netherlands and Norway have introduced similar strict controls on the sponsorship of delegates to healthcare meetings and other countries are moving in the same direction but at their own pace.

In conclusion...

The Healthcare Industry and healthcare professionals (physicians, pharmacists, nurses etc.) will continue to be partners in advancing medical science in the highly regulated environment of healthcare meetings. Support of healthcare meetings should continue but it will be more closely scrutinised and Continuing Medical Education (CME) will continue to be a core driver in the evolution of education and communication at healthcare congresses.

HCA Publications

As part of the HCA's remit to provide a service to the meetings industry, representative of the many parties involved, various publications have been produced to assist in the organisation of large medical meetings.

	<h3>Housing Guidelines</h3> <p>It is acknowledged by those involved in congress organisation that in many cases there is a substantial lack of adequate hotel accommodation in many of the cities chosen to host medical meetings. This document seeks to set out guidelines for the equitable resolution to the problems to the satisfaction of all parties.</p>		<h3>Safety and Security</h3> <p>To assist those involved in the planning of healthcare events, this guideline document identifies key issues regarding safety and security, risk assessment and liability. It defines the responsibilities to be upheld by each of the individual parties involved and includes check lists for organisers, sponsor events teams, participants and exhibitors.</p>
<h3>First Steps</h3> <p>The First Steps in the Preparation of an International Medical Meeting for the Chairman of the Meeting is designed to assist the Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee in the host country and assumes that the country has already been selected, but not necessarily the venue. A step-by-step action plan is provided.</p>		<h3>Sponsorship Prospectus</h3> <p>This publication seeks to guide organising committees of medical meetings in the raising of sponsorship and invitations to industry. Designed as a template, this Guideline for the Sponsorship Prospectus is intended to be of assistance when preparing the invitation document.</p>	

The Associations

International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCO)

The International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCO), a non-profit organization founded in 1968, represents professional organizers and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events. Currently there are over 90 IAPCO members in 32 countries. IAPCO is committed to raising standards of service among its members and other sectors of the meetings industry by means of continuing education and interaction with other professionals. IAPCO has members worldwide whose activities are monitored on an annual basis. As a result, IAPCO membership offers a unique quality assurance recognised by conference clients and suppliers all over the world.

Inge Hanser, President of IAPCO, represents the Association on the HCA.

Other IAPCO representatives include: Jorge Castex, Sarah Storie-Pugh, Carolina G. Sicilia and Vincent van Wulfen.

International Pharmaceutical Congress Advisory Association (IPCAA)

IPCAA members are drawn from the research-based healthcare industry. The organisation recognises that healthcare congresses are an important part of Continuing Medical Education (CME) and are indispensable for the spread of knowledge and the exchange of experience. IPCAA's aims are to:

- Promote the highest possible standards at healthcare congresses
- Establish a common and consistent congress policy through recognised partnership with medical societies
 - Ensure optimum benefit for all parties involved in healthcare congresses
 - Exchange experience, data and documentation on healthcare congresses
- Organise meetings of members to exchange knowledge and information about healthcare congress management
- Maintain a Code of Conduct and Guidelines on the organisation of and participation in healthcare congresses

Kurt Nagel, President of IPCAA, currently represents IPCAA on the HCA supported by IPCAA's Executive Director, Dennis Wheatley.

Other IPCAA representatives include Florence Manger.

Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association (HCEA)

The Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association (HCEA) is a trade association of more than 700 organizations united by their common desire to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare conventions and exhibitions as an educational and marketing medium. HCEA promotes the value of exhibits as an integral part of healthcare meetings. Since 1930 HCEA has provided healthcare exhibitors, associations and suppliers a forum for the exchange of mutually beneficial information and ideas. HCEA offers its members a continuing opportunity to become more knowledgeable in their profession through meaningful communication, the exchange of ideas with other members and the many services provided exclusively to HCEA members.

HCEA is represented on the HCA by Eric Allen, Executive Vice President, together with Janine Smith, Chair, International Chapter.

Should you require copies of the documentation, please visit the HCA website on www.healthcarecongress.net where they can be downloaded. Alternatively, contact one with the Associations who will be delighted to send you a copy.

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