



Code of Conduct

Healthcare Congress Guidelines

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Foreword

It is the policy of the International Pharmaceutical Congress Advisory Association that no company can become a member without subscribing to the Code of Conduct, which was first established in 1991 after consultation with European regulatory and pharmaceutical marketing authorities.

The **Code of Conduct** provides information on the educational content of medical congresses, scientific objectivity, audiences, venues, honoraria to speakers, hospitality, travel and accommodation costs, and exhibitions.

In addition to its Code of Conduct, IPCAA has also approved **Guidelines** to help clarify some areas of congress organisation that have proved contentious. These Guidelines are particularly concerned with the costs of participating in international congresses and the number of congresses staged in a single therapeutic area. IPCAA policy, as stated in the Guidelines, is in favour of keeping costs “within acceptable limits” and is against “mushrooming” congresses.

The Guidelines also provide organisers with information on congress venues, budgets and other financial considerations, exhibition space, delegate registration, congress-related publishing, satellite and sponsored meetings, social events and payments to speakers.

These formal documents of IPCAA are now combined in a fifth edition, and we hope they continue to prove useful to everyone engaged in the organisation of medical congresses.

Anna Frick
President

Code of Conduct

Preamble

The healthcare industry has an obligation to not only conduct and sponsor clinical research but also to ensure that the results of those studies are properly communicated to the medical profession. One of the most efficient methods of ensuring that this obligation is achieved is via medical congresses, which may be sponsored partly or wholly by the healthcare industry. The industry should ensure that all such scientific communications are fair, accurate and up-to-date.

Medical congresses are an important part of continuing medical education and are indispensable for the spread of knowledge and exchange of experience. For this reason, medical congresses should not be included within the framework of advertising regulations.

However, the promotional activities which are conducted during medical congresses – such as commercial exhibitions, the distribution of product information, etc – should properly be dealt with by national and international medical advertising regulations.

This Code of Conduct thus applies to the congress activities of the manufacturers of healthcare products which are dispensed against prescription and other products and devices used by healthcare professionals.

As a result of its extensive worldwide experience, IPCAA is willing to give advice to congress organisers in order to promote the highest possible standard of scientific information as the main objective of international medical congresses. This is reflected in IPCAA's mission statement - "To ensure optimum benefit for all parties involved in medical congresses through the development of a common and consistent congress policy and through recognised partnership with medical societies".

While this Code of Conduct applies to all IPCAA member companies, it is also widely accepted as standard practice within the healthcare industry

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Information and education

Because medical knowledge and continuing medical education are the “raison d’etre” for medical congresses, the scientific and clinical information exchanged at these events should not be restricted.

Promotional activities should comply with national and international regulations on product promotion; this will mean that in some countries information on certain products, although licensed elsewhere, may not be provided.

Scientific objectivity

Strict scientific criteria should be applied to the content of all medical congresses. The aim is to exchange balanced, unbiased and scientifically sound information. All such information must be accountable, and substantiation should be provided in response to legitimate inquiries.

Comparison of products is permitted with appropriate scientific justification, subject to national and international regulations.

Symposia audiences

Only delegates registered to attend should be allowed into the scientific sessions of the congress

Congress venues

The venue of any congress should be chosen with care, taking into account the range of facilities, access, security and cost. The use of perceived resort locations should be avoided..

Honoraria and inducements

Other than honoraria to speakers and meeting chairmen, no monetary payments or other inducements should be made to any congress delegate unless they relate to reimbursement of reasonable accommodation, travel expenses and registration fee, always provided that these do not conflict with any specific national regulations.

The travel and accommodation costs of accompanying persons (including dependents) cannot be the responsibility of any sponsoring company.

Hospitality

Hospitality should always be, and be seen to be, secondary to the main scientific purpose of the congress. It should be of an appropriate nature and level which does not exceed that which the recipients might normally adopt when paying themselves. Relevant regulatory codes and self-regulatory codes of the industry as well as medical societies, should be taken into consideration when deciding on the level and nature of hospitality to be offered to participants.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions enable sponsoring companies to promote their products to the medical profession as approved by the relevant regulatory authorities and so should comply with national and international regulations on healthcare advertising. Activities inappropriate to the practice of medicine should be avoided.

Monitoring

In the event of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, the complaint should be brought to the attention of the IPCAA secretariat, who will bring the complaint before the next IPCAA Council meeting. The Council will take due account of any other action relating to the complaint from regulatory authorities. The company in question has the right to be represented at the Council meeting.

If the complaint is upheld, the offending company will be given a written warning as to its future conduct. At the discretion of the Council, IPCAA reserves the right to publicly report breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Medical Congress Guidelines

1. Preamble

1.1 The aim of these guidelines is to encourage the highest possible standards at medical congresses by providing guidance to organisers. IPCAA believes that this will be best achieved in congresses whose prime objective is the exchange of up-to-date scientific information and which are organised in a fair and professional way at a suitable venue (see section 3). Faced with tighter legislation, regulations and self-regulatory codes on a global basis, the industry has an obligation to be strict in the application of the relevant principles. In the event that meetings organisers are not able or willing to comply with regulatory requirements, then such events should not attract industry sponsorship, of either a financial or other nature.

1.2 The pharmaceutical industry considers medical congresses an indispensable and effective platform for the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the exchange of experience in clinical research and development. Thus, the success of a medical congress will depend on a partnership between the organisers, the delegates and the sponsoring companies who directly and indirectly fund the event. All will expect that the programme is of high scientific content, that participants meet their educational wishes and that the venue proves suitable to delegates and sponsors.

1.3 IPCAA recognises that the organisation of medical congresses is a challenging and expensive undertaking. Fund raising to defray this expense is a legitimate right of congress organisers. The healthcare industry is one major source of such funds and – without wishing to influence scientific content – has the right as a partner to represent its views (through IPCAA) on the organisation of medical congresses and on the charges made for specific activities.

1.4 Individual medical congresses should be seen as self-supporting, financed, for example, through registration fees, sale of exhibition space, advertisements, sponsoring of symposia and surplus funds from previous congresses. Any retained (surplus) funds should not exceed 10% of the total budgeted cost of the meeting (see section 2.9).

1.5 IPCAA has stated its disapproval of “mushrooming” congresses and will be unable to support the emerging trend of several congresses on similar topics taking place within a short time scale of each other.

1.6 Those medical societies, which organise their congresses through a Core PCO, permanent secretariat, management company etc., will arguably find it easier to interact with sponsoring companies than those societies that rely solely on an ad hoc organising committee.

1.7 IPCAA recommends that, when organising committees are appointing a Professional Congress Organiser (PCO) to manage the meeting, only professional, experienced, internationally recognised companies with suitable financial assets are considered. It is also critical to the smooth development of the meeting that the PCO is appointed at the early planning stage to ensure that good business procedures are followed.

IPCAA can draw on its wide international experience to recommend suitably qualified PCOs, venues and congress centres.

2. Sponsorship/Finance

2.1 Organising committees are strongly encouraged to provide a formal sponsorship bid document (the prospectus) well in advance of any request to the healthcare industry (or other sponsors) for financial support. This critical document should be produced by the secretariat or responsible PCO etc., and should include a statement of the objectives of the meeting from a scientific, educational and financial perspective

2.2 With continuing internal regulatory pressures on potential sponsors, arising from Healthcare Compliance issues, congress organisers should note that sponsorship decisions take much longer, as a rule, than previously, due to the more sophisticated corporate approval systems, of necessity, implemented in recent years.

2.3 The prospectus should show the demographics of previous events, with delegate attendance split by country and expected attendance at the meeting for which sponsorship is sought.

2.4 The prospectus should provide itemised costs of satellite symposia, exhibition space and any other support opportunities which are available. The sale of “packaged” activities leading to gold and silver sponsorship levels is definitely discouraged.

2.5 Where organisers wish to recognise major sponsors with gold and silver awards, this should be calculated on the comparative total value of each sponsor’s activities.

2.6 The prospectus should clearly state the pre-payment and cancellation policies that apply to both themselves and sponsoring companies for satellite symposia slots, exhibition space and any other sponsorship items. Except in exceptional circumstances, all prices and Invoicing should be in the currency of the host country. All agreements should be covered by legally binding contracts and there should be absolutely no option for the secretariat/PCO to change anything at its sole discretion.

2.7 The organisers should indicate the Continuing Medical Education (CME) credit status of the components of the meeting (including, if appropriate, portions of the exhibition) along with the name of the awarding body. This is seen as an increasingly important factor in encouraging delegate attendance at international medical meetings.

2.8 When appropriate, the prospectus should provide an outline of the VAT recovery procedures in the country in which the meeting is being held. It should also detail any visa requirements, visa restrictions, health warnings and other aspects which may affect a significant proportion of potential participants.

2.9 As legislation, regulations and industry self-regulatory codes governing the promotion of medical products vary from country to country, the prospectus should outline any specific rules that will affect the activities of sponsoring companies, particularly with reference to exhibition activities.

2.10 It is considered good business practice that the prospectus should indicate how any residual funds arising from the meeting will be distributed. This should include any support given to the host organising society.

2.11 As a principle, IPCAA discourages any agreements which give unfair advantage to individual sponsors with similar financial involvement. Level of sponsorship should be a more important measure of involvement than the identity of the sponsor.

2.12 Member companies of IPCAA are unlikely to provide unconditional support for congresses in the form of platinum, gold or silver sponsorship, but would prefer a fair and transparent system of value-for-money sponsorship in which itemised activities are available at a published price. IPCAA believes that it is in the common interest to keep the costs of medical congresses within acceptable limits.

2.13 IPCAA may from time to time publish from its database any maximum charges (or other terms) encountered by member companies.

2.14 It is now established practice, for the organising committees of medical congresses to share their financial and budgetary objectives with prospective sponsoring companies well in advance of the congress, and publish an audited statement of accounts within 6-12 months of the end of the congress. This statement of accounts should be made available to the companies who have provided sponsorship.

3. Venue

3.1 The congress venue should be chosen with care, taking into account the range of facilities available, in particular the capacity of both the congress hall, a sufficient number of appropriate quality hotel rooms, accessibility (no more than one hour from a major international airport), security and cost. A congress located in a perceived resort location may have a negative impact on the image of the meeting. Careful consideration should thus be given to the choice of venue. The personal security of all attendees should be a critical consideration in the venue selection process.

IPCAA has wide experience of congress and hotel facilities around the world and is willing to share this experience with congress organisers.

3.2 Exhibition halls and rooms for sponsored symposia should be within convenient access of the main congress areas and should be an integral part of the main congress location. Adequate freight handling facilities and access must be available. Tents and similar temporary structures are not acceptable.

3.3 The venue should provide up-to-date audio-visual equipment, a competent technician (English speaking) and simultaneous translation facilities.

3.4 The location of the congress should support a truly international programme, without restriction of scientific content or the participation of individuals. Countries, which impose artificially onerous restrictions on the promotional activities of sponsors, should be avoided.

4. Scientific programme

4.1 The scientific programme is of paramount importance at all medical congresses. This would usually be composed of independent keynote lectures, plenary sessions, free communications and poster

sessions, all of which should be integrated into the congress programme. Satellite symposia and other sponsored sessions should also be an integral part of the scientific programme.

IPCAA defines these symposia as:

Satellite symposia

Planned, organised and staged by a sponsoring company to be held before, after or during the main congress programme. There should be no restrictions on attendance at satellite symposia.

Sponsored symposia

In which the sponsoring company's name is linked to a specific session in the core programme of the meeting; the sponsor has no organisational or editorial control.

4.2 Companies are prepared to pay for the opportunity to hold a satellite symposium or to sponsor a symposium during the congress. Items such as room rental fees, slide, computer and/or video projection, sound amplification and competent technical assistance (in English) should be included in this cost.

4.3 Organisers should ensure that there is no duplication of scientific content throughout the course of a congress and that delegate social activities do not clash with any part of the scientific programme (including satellite symposia). However, in order to prevent any one company monopolising any one meeting, no more than 20% of the total satellite symposium opportunities should be sold to any one company.

4.4 Whenever satellite symposia are scheduled for more than three hours, the organising committee should ensure that there are adequate refreshment facilities in the immediate vicinity.

4.5 Free communication and poster sessions are an important part of the scientific programme and are considered the responsibility of the organising committee. Details of each presentation should be included in the programme book, and summaries included in the book of abstracts.

4.6 It is the responsibility of the congress organisers to ensure that speakers at all scientific sessions (including satellite symposia) are neither double booked nor have overlapping commitments.

4.7 Honoraria paid to speakers at satellite symposia should cover the cost of manuscript production and the presentation. Organisers should specify a recommended level of honoraria which will vary between

therapeutic areas; the appropriate IPCAA taskforce can advise as required.

4.8 It is inappropriate for either the congress organisers or the sponsoring companies to encourage touristic or other social events for delegates while the scientific programme is in progress (including satellite symposia).

5. Exhibitions

5.1 As indicated in paragraph 3.2, the area allocated to exhibitions should be in an appropriate location with convenient access to and from the main congress areas; the exhibition should be planned as an integral and educational part of the congress.

5.2 The exhibition organisers should arrange a site visit well in advance of the event and invite all exhibiting companies. The exhibition regulations and floor plan should be distributed to all interested parties at least one month prior to this meeting. The allocation of exhibition space should follow the principles indicated in section 2.10.

5.3 It is the responsibility of the congress organisers to produce a detailed exhibitors manual at least nine months prior to the event. In addition to accurate floor plans, this document should include contact details of the nominated contract person(s) and an outline of any country-specific regulatory issues which may affect promotion at a medical exhibition. Details of appointed customs brokers, etc, must also be provided.

5.4 Material displayed on exhibition stands – whether pharmaceutical information, equipment, devices, or items for free distribution – should comply with the international codes of practice and the healthcare regulations of the host country. Guidance should be provided in the exhibitors manual.

5.5 The cost of exhibition space should bear a relationship to the price charged at recent similar medical congresses at the same (or similar) venue. IPCAA maintains an informal database of standard exhibition costs at major international venues. This is regularly updated and may be used by member companies in their negotiations with congress organisers.

5.6 Services provided – such as electricity supply, TV monitors or telephone lines – should be of an acceptable international standard and should be charged at a price compatible with the standard rates in the

relevant city.

5.7 Exhibitors should be issued with complimentary exhibition passes for their sales and technical staff to man the exhibition stand.

5.8 Adequate secure and convenient on-site storage should be provided for exhibitors, with access guaranteed during the opening hours of the exhibition. In recognition of the international aspects of these events, off-site truck parking should be provided for the duration of the meeting.

5.9 A minimum build-up period of 48 hours (24 hours for breakdown) should be allowed, with good access for loading and unloading guaranteed. Where organisers sell individual exhibition space in excess of 100 sq. m. it should be recognised that build-up period of more than 48 hours will be required.

5.10 Space allocated to exhibition use should be provided with adequate fire fighting facilities, emergency exits and corridors between the exhibits to allow rapid evacuation. This and the provision of 24-hour security is the responsibility of the exhibition organiser.

5.11 If the organisers of the exhibition are contractually obliged to use contract suppliers (such as catering), it is their duty to negotiate fair and equitable prices for the provision of those services, which should be of an internationally satisfactory level.

The Health Care Exhibitors Association (HCEA) has produced a detailed set of guidelines on good practice at medical exhibitions; this document can be obtained directly from HCEA (hcea@assnhq.com).

6. Registration package

6.1 Delegate registration fees should include:

- Congress bag (or similar) containing the programme, abstract book, etc
- ID badge
- The right to attend all lectures, sessions and exhibitions
- Participation in the opening ceremony
- Public transport vouchers or a shuttle bus service if appropriate
- Certificate of attendance

And exclude:

- Social activities (which should be charged to the individual separately)
- Gifts and mementoes
- Tours of any kinds

7. Housing

7.1 It is acknowledged by those involved in congress organisation that in many cases there is a substantial shortfall of adequate hotel accommodation in most of the cities chosen to host medical meetings. It is also recognised that the development of an organised procedure to deal fairly with the issue is not straightforward.

7.2 The full text of the HCA Housing Guidelines is available as a separate document. The objective of these guidelines is the equitable resolution of major outstanding issues.

7.3 In addition, there are a number of actions that can be taken to resolve some of the difficulties associated with congress housing:

- A suitably qualified PCO/DMC/Convention Bureau should be appointed by the organising committee before any agreements with hotels and sponsors are made.
- At the time of preparation of the bid, the bidding organisation (or its PCO) should reserve at least 70-80% of their total estimated room requirements. These should be confirmed once the bid is accepted. Such a move would help prevent third parties taking advantage of the rooming situation – which often leads to rapid price escalation and disadvantages to the congress and its sponsors.
- The organising committee and the PCO should state any procedures they have developed to deal with demand for rooms which exceeds the capacity of the host city.
- The PCO should be able to easily identify those delegates who receive multiple invitations and have in place a system which reduces to a minimum the impact of this practice on accommodation.

8. Social events

8.1 It is against regulatory codes for companies to sponsor official congress social events such as “gala dinners”, entertainment, etc. In addition, sponsors should not organise any social activities which

conflict with the scientific programme. Any social events, whether arranged by the organising committee or by sponsors, should be modest and secondary to the main purpose of the congress.

8.2 It is inappropriate for either the congress organisers or the healthcare industry to encourage touristic or other social events for delegates while the scientific programme is in progress (including satellite symposia).

Keep the accompany person programmes to a minimum and should not be part of the main programme book.

9. Honoraria and inducements

9.1 Other than honoraria to speakers and symposium chairmen, no monetary payments or other inducements should be made to congress attendees unless they relate to the reimbursement of reasonable accommodation and travel expenses, always provided these do not conflict with national regulations.

10. Print and electronic media

10.1 Organisers of a satellite symposium have the right to choose their own publishers, reporters, photographers and other technicians for the production of material which relates to that symposium.

10.2 The congress logo may be of benefit to sponsoring companies in publications and other material dependent on the congress. Any charges made by the organisers for use of the logo should relate only to the costs of reproduction.

11. Evaluation

11.1 The organisers of medical congresses should make time available for a review and evaluation meeting with sponsoring companies before the close of the congress. It would be useful for the local organisers of the next congress to be present. The timing of this meeting should be announced in good time prior to the beginning of the congress.

11.2 The organisers should provide to all sponsoring companies within one month of the conference ending a set of statistics which include delegate demographics.



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