



**RACP**  
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# FAQs



**Ethical relationships** between  
**health professionals** and **industry**

## 4. Pharmaceutical company sponsorship for clinical meeting or grand round

### I've been offered pharmaceutical company sponsorship for my clinical meeting or my grand round. How should I manage this?

#### What are the risks and benefits of accepting such funding?

Medical grand rounds and clinical meetings are important for medical training and ongoing professional development. Being able to invite speakers and provide food can enhance both meeting quality and attendance. Ideally, financial support for grand rounds should be sought from the clinical institution or from alternative unbiased sources (e.g., from attendees or philanthropic sources).

Any event sponsored by a pharmaceutical company could, however, be a marketing opportunity and carries a risk of influencing the capacities of practitioners to make disinterested decisions on behalf of their patients. Even where sponsors are prohibited from offering promotional material (e.g., offprints) or from having contact with attendees, sponsorship can still erode public and professional perception of your objectivity, integrity and professional judgement. These are particularly salient in teaching institutions because of the powerful effect that normalising industry interactions might have on students and trainees and on the culture of institutions.

#### Should the value of the drug company sponsorship influence my decision?

In general, any sponsorship raises questions of inappropriate influence and conflict of interest and may shape the institutional culture. At the same time, if a decision is made to accept industry sponsorship, you should limit this as much as possible. Food should not be excessive and there should be no other promotional materials offered to meeting attendees.

#### Should I accept the offer if it comes with conditions or expectations?

No. All industry support should be untied. The industry supporter should have no part in determining the speaker, subject or content for the meeting.

#### What strategies can I use to accept sponsorship in a manner that is ethically and professionally justifiable?

If it is decided that there is no alternative to industry sponsorship, there are several steps that can be taken to mitigate undue influence:

- ensuring that all industry support is untied and does not come with any conditions
- ensuring that the industry supporter has no part in determining the speaker, subject matter or content of the grand round or meeting
- ensuring that all content presented is in accordance with the accepted norms of scientific practice and that it is communicated in an unbiased and balanced manner, especially if any products are mentioned
- Where there is an industry sponsored speaker, ensuring that alternative viewpoints are also represented (e.g., by specifically inviting another speaker who has an alternative viewpoint)
- ensuring that food is not excessive and that attendees do not receive any other gifts
- ensuring that displays of industry materials and interactions with industry personnel are prohibited or kept to a minimum
- ensuring that any promotional material is displayed in an area separate from the one in which the event is taking place
- ensuring that attendees are alerted to the fact that the meeting is sponsored
- ensuring that all speaker dualities of interest are declared to the audience.

For more information visit  
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