Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)

Faculty of Pain Medicine

Policy for the Relationship Between Fellows, Trainees, and the Healthcare Industry

Background Paper

BACKGROUND

The way that healthcare companies can advertise their products to medical practitioners is increasingly being restricted. Educational avenues remain open for the promotion of their products and a number of companies are trying new ways to access these.

It is essential that PS40 gives clear guidance that protects both Fellows and the trainees of ANZCA and the Faculty of Pain Medicine. Trainees have the greatest potential for being influenced by industry representatives. Fellows also require guidance about ethical relationships with industry. The information in PS40 complements that contained in the ANZCA Code of Professional Conduct which similarly applies to both trainees and Fellows.

Medicines Australia (MA), a peak body representing mainly pharmaceutical companies, met with College representatives in August 2009 and described their recently revised code of conduct¹, which is recognised by government. The MA code stipulates increased scrutiny of all sponsorship activity - all drug companies must declare all educational events and the amount of sponsorship provided. MA oversees a complaints mechanism and significant financial penalties may apply to member companies that breach the code. However, this does not necessarily prevent untoward behaviour and most complaints raised are between the companies themselves.

The interrelationships between education and commercial company sponsorship are complex. The following scenarios illustrate healthcare industry inducements proposed to date which have been debated within the College:

1. Sponsorship of a trial viva session
2. Provision of a cheaper workshop to trainees and Fellows by providing sole sponsorship of the event
3. Sponsorship of travel costs for attendance at interstate workshops or business meetings with an educational component.

It is likely that trainees and Fellows will face increasingly complex, and as yet unforeseen, ethical decisions and will require clear guidance when evaluating the relative merits of healthcare industry inducements for educational activities.

It had become common for the availability of CPD points to be used as a promotional tool in advertising educational events. While some College-organised events in the past have had valid pre-allocated points this will no longer be the case and no educational events, either College-organised or otherwise, will be pre-allocated CPD points. The current CPD focus is on individualised programs with personal assessment of the value of the event to the individual Fellow. Advertising of pre-allocated points is therefore inappropriate and peripheral to the main topic and consequently discussion of this is excluded from PS40.
Rather than attempting to provide guidance for all possible scenarios that may arise between trainees, Fellows, the College and the healthcare industry, PS40 models the correct behaviours for appropriate interactions between the relevant parties.

MODIFICATIONS

PS40 has been modified to:

1. Include advice regarding sponsorship of educational activities aimed at trainees.
2. Allow evaluation of possible influence from healthcare industry sponsorship by identifying the role within the College of the organiser as well as the number of sponsors associated with an educational event.
3. State the circumstances under which the College will not promote sponsorship.
4. Stipulate that all associated publications and promotional material from the healthcare industry complies with College requirements.
5. Outline possible avenues for advice for situations not presently covered by PS40.
6. More clearly express the responsibility of presenters and participants at educational meetings to declare financial or material support from the healthcare industry.
7. Articulate the College’s ethical position and encourage identification of the personal ethical responsibilities of individual Fellows.
8. Make reference to the ANZCA Conflict of Interest Policy.
9. Include ANZCA business meetings within the terms of the document.
10. Encourage the decision to not promote sponsorship offers that directly benefit an individual Fellow or trainee.

RELATED ANZCA DOCUMENTS


REFERENCES


AUTHORS OF PS40

The core group responsible for development of this professional document was:

Rowan Thomas, Former Chair, Victorian Regional Committee
Michelle Mulligan, Chair, Fellowship Affairs Committee
Richard Willis, Director of Professional Affairs - IMGS
Brendan Moore, Vice Dean, Faculty of Pain Medicine
Nicole Phillips, Former Councillor
Mardi Peters, Marketing and Sponsorship Manager
IN ADDITION, THE FOLLOWING WERE CONSULTED:

Fellowship Affairs Committee
National and regional committees
Faculty of Pain Medicine Board
Trainee Committee
Ian Higgins, Director Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine Foundation
Alan Merry, Chair, Research Committee; Chair, Quality & Safety Committee
Lindy Roberts, Vice President
Milton Cohen, Director of Professional Affairs - Faculty of Pain Medicine
John Biviano, Director, Policy, Quality & Accreditation
Peter Roessler, Director Professional Affairs - Professional Documents
Rebecca Conning, Policy Officer

Professional documents of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) are intended to apply wherever anaesthesia is administered and perioperative medicine practised within Australia and New Zealand. It is the responsibility of each practitioner to have express regard to the particular circumstances of each case, and the application of these ANZCA documents in each case. It is recognised that there may be exceptional situations (e.g. some emergencies) in which the interests of patients over-ride the requirement for compliance with some or all of these ANZCA documents.

ANZCA professional documents are reviewed from time to time, and it is the responsibility of each practitioner to ensure that he or she has obtained the current version which is available from the College website (www.anzca.edu.au). Each document is prepared in the context of the entire body of the College’s professional documents, and should be interpreted in this way. These professional documents have been prepared having regard to the information available at the time of their preparation, and practitioners should therefore take into account any information that may have been published or become available subsequently.

Whilst ANZCA endeavours to ensure that its professional documents are as current as possible at the time of their preparation, it takes no responsibility for matters arising from changed circumstances or information or material which may have become available subsequently.

Promulgated (as PS40 BP): 2011
Date of current document: February 2011*

*This background paper is being piloted for 12 months and will be reviewed in March 2012.

© ANZCA professional documents are copyright and cannot be reproduced in whole or in part without prior permission.

ANZCA Website: www.anzca.edu.au
FPM Website: www.anzca.edu.au/fpm