

Area L AHEC Office of Continuing Medical Education



Policy on Conflict of Interest

1.0 PURPOSE

It is important that continuing medical education (CME) content be based on needs assessments and not be biased by commercial or marketing influences. This policy is designed to ensure that The Area L AHEC Office of Continuing Medical Education (OCME) develops all CME programming without undue influence by any individuals or groups associated with these CME activities.

Full disclosure of conflicting or potentially conflicting interests is required as part of the planning or provision of all CME activities, and this policy addresses the resolution of any real or perceived conflicts in order to promote the integrity of CME activities sponsored by the OCME.

Teachers/presenters/authors/individuals in control of CME content will be expected to offer CME that is objective, balanced, scientifically rigorous, evidence-based and in compliance with the *2004 Updated ACCME Standards for Commercial Support*.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Commercial Interest: The ACCME defines a “commercial interest” as any proprietary entity producing health care goods or services, with the exemption of non-profit or government organizations and non-health care related companies.

Relevant Financial Relationships: Financial relationships are those relationships in the past 12 months in which the individual benefited by receiving a salary, royalty, intellectual property rights, consulting fee, honoraria, ownership interest (e.g., stocks, stock options or other ownership interest, excluding diversified mutual funds), or other financial benefit in any amount. Financial benefits are usually associated with roles such as employment, management position, independent contractor (including contracted research), consulting, speaking and teaching, membership on advisory committees or review panels, board membership, and other activities from which remuneration is received or expected. ACCME considers relationships of the person involved in the CME activity to include financial relationships of a spouse or partner.

Conflict of Interest (COI): The ACCME considers circumstances to create a conflict of interest when an individual has an opportunity to affect CME content about products or services of a commercial interest with which he/she has a financial relationship.

3.0 POLICY: IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Identification of Conflicts of Interest (COI):

- The OCME requires that all individuals in control of CME content, including the planning committee, to complete the Area L AHEC Conflict of Interest/Content Validity/Copyright Compliance Form.
- The primary responsibility to identify, address and attempt to resolve any COI belongs to the director of the Area L AHEC OCME.
- Any concerns identified on returned disclosure identified by the OCME Director will be reviewed by CME staff, the activity director, and the CME review committee.

- The OCME Director will sign documentation stating that all conflicts of interest for the event have been identified and resolved (see Resolution of Conflict Form).
- All identified actual and potential COI, along with resolution mechanisms, will be disclosed to CME activity participants.

3.2 Mechanisms for Resolving Conflicts of Interest:

The following are the mechanisms for resolving conflicts of interest (COI).

- Alter financial relationships – an individual may change his/her relationships with commercial interests.
- Alter control over content -- a) choose someone else to control that part of the content, b) change the content of the person’s assignment, or c) limit the content to a report without recommendations.
- Attestation – persons who indicate the existence of such relationships will be asked to agree in writing that said conflicts or relationships will not bias or otherwise influence their involvement in the CME activity, e.g. Area L AHEC Conflict of Interest/Content Validity/Copyright Compliance Form.
- Peer Evaluation – an informed learner or peer will be present, to the fullest extent possible, at the CME activity. This evaluator will be asked to complete a formal, detailed evaluation to measure any bias in the activity.
- Independent Content Validation -- provide evidence that the information in question is valid and aligned with the interests of the public and is based upon “evidence that is accepted within the profession of medicine” and that all materials used “conform to the generally accepted standards of experimental design, data collection, and analysis.”
- Elimination -- Activity Directors, activity planning committee members, and/or teachers/authors who are perceived as either manifesting irresolvable COI or being biased may be eliminated from consideration as resources for the CME activity.