



Speakers' Bureaus:

Best Practices for Academic Medical Centers*

The Problem:

Pharmaceutical companies often recruit physicians to perform speeches or presentations for the purpose of marketing a specific drug. In 2010, 8.6% of physicians reported having received payments for participating in speakers' bureaus.¹ These speakers' bureaus leverage the credibility of physicians in order to promote the use of pharmaceutical products. The physicians are generally trained to present a certain message, or are provided with pre-produced slides.^{2,3} The audience may assume that these presentations are objective, when in fact they are heavily biased towards the interests of the industry sponsor.

Speakers' bureaus may lead to the dissemination of false or biased information. Exposure to industry-sponsored speaking events is associated with decreased quality of prescribing.⁴ Additionally, the compensation provided for these engagements may influence the attitudes or judgment of the presenter.^{5,6}

Best Policy Practices:

Prior approval must be required for participation in industry-sponsored speaking events.

Faculty members must be prohibited from participating in industry-sponsored speaking events for which marketing is the primary purpose.

Faculty members must maintain control over the content of speeches and/or presentations. They must prepare content without input from or prior review by the industry sponsor.

AMCs should take measures to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate speaking engagements, and should ensure that faculty members understand the distinctions.

Model Policy

Johns Hopkins
University:

The policy clearly defines specific standards for speaking engagements, stating that faculty members speaking at industry-sponsored events must "[retain] full control and authority over professional material". Additionally, faculty cannot take part in any activity in which a company "creates the slide set (or other presentation materials) and has the final approval of all content and edits; [or] the faculty member...acts as the company's employee or spokesperson for the purposes of dissemination of company-generated presentation materials". Public disclosure is also required.

[http://
www.hopkinsmedicine.org/
Research/OPC/
Policy_Industry_Interaction/
policy_interaction_industry.ht
ml](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/Research/OPC/Policy_Industry_Interaction/policy_interaction_industry.html)

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Every speaker must disclose all sources of industry funding at the speaking event. ■

References

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Figure 1.

