



**College of Psychiatrists
of Ireland**

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The Relationship between Psychiatrists, College of Psychiatrists of Ireland and the Pharmaceutical Industry

Position Paper EAP04/2013

Approved by Council

College of Psychiatrists of Ireland

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Contents:

Rationale for position statement

Page 3

Relevant Documents

Page 4 - 6

1. The Medical Council Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners (2009).
2. Guide to Professional Conduct & Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners. Relationships between Doctors and Industry - Frequently Asked Questions', Medical Council, October 2012.
3. Code of Marketing Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry (7th Edition 2008), published by the Irish Pharmaceutical Health Care Association (IPHA), 2008.
4. Regulations for the Control of Advertising of Medicinal Products (2007).
5. Relationships with Pharmaceutical and other Commercial Organisations (2008), Royal College of Psychiatrists College Report, CR148.
6. The College of Psychiatry of Ireland Professional Competence for Psychiatrists including CPD and Clinical Audit (June 2011).

Recommendations

Page 6 - 7

Information and Guidance for Psychiatrists and Trainees

College Activities and their Relationship with Pharmaceutical Industry

Guidance to Academic Psychiatrists and NCHDs in research

References

Page 8

Position Paper EAP04/2013

The Relationship between Psychiatrists, the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland and the Pharmaceutical Industry

Rationale for position statement

The 7th Edition of the Medical Council's 'Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners (2009)' gives guidance on professional practice in relation to prescribing medication. More recently the Medical Council produced a supplementary document 'Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners - Relationships between doctors and industry - FAQ's' (October 2012).

In September 2010, the Council of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland passed a motion that 'The College would cease receiving any sponsorship from Pharmaceutical companies of its academic meetings or other activities'. This decision was taken following representation from a number of members. In April 2011, the College conference had no funding from Pharmaceutical companies. Over 70% of those attending this Conference supported this decision.

The College recognises the great benefits which have been achieved through advances in pharmacotherapy. Many advances have only occurred because of the pharmaceutical industry and its commitment to research and development. However the College is also aware of the risks of conflict of interests, and the importance for Psychiatry to be able to form an independent appraisal of the value of specific drugs. Research in this area has overwhelmingly showed that clinicians are influenced by the pharmaceutical industry's marketing strategies which have an impact on prescribing practises. While Psychiatrists aim to improve the lives of patients and their families the pharmaceutical industry's aims are primarily commercial in nature. These aims do not always coincide.

In the interest of service users, psychiatrists, the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland as well as the wider interests of the public it is considered opportune to provide a position statement at this time. There are a number of recommendations provided but at the outset it should be stated that Psychiatrists remain responsible and autonomous for their own professional practise in this area.

The aims are threefold:

1. To issue information and guidance to psychiatrists and trainees.
2. To review College activities in their relationships with the pharmaceutical industry.
3. To provide guidance to Academic Psychiatrists.

Relevant Documents

1. The Medical Council Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners (2009)

Section 59 on Prescribing makes the following points in Section E subsection 59:

“(a) 59.9 Your choice of therapy for your patients should always be made in the patient’s best interest. You are advised not to accept gifts (including hospitality) from pharmaceutical medical devices or other commercial enterprises. You should be aware that even low value promotional materials are offered by commercial enterprises with the intention of influencing prescribing and treatment decisions.

(b) 59.10 In general educational funding from commercial enterprises to the healthcare sector should be channelled through unrestricted Educational and Development Funds and be managed without influence from the commercial enterprise in question.

(c) 59.11 If you receive financial support or other resources from pharmaceutical companies and/or related enterprises in connection with professional activities including lectures, presentations and publications, development of clinical services or conducting research you should address any potential conflicts of interest that arise. In these circumstances your patients and any other relevant party should be informed about any professional relationship you have with these companies.”

2. Guide to Professional Conduct & Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners. Relationships between Doctors and Industry - Frequently Asked Questions, Medical Council, October 2012

This is the Medical Council’s supplementary document to its ‘Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners 2009’. This is to provide doctors with advice on the complex relationship between doctors and the pharmaceutical industry. This document does not provide any additional rules but clarifies existing guidance and principles in the format of ‘Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)’ and shows how it relates to other codes and regulations.

The following are some key extracts from the FAQ document:

Is it right for doctors to accept gifts and hospitality from pharmaceutical, medical devices or other commercial companies?

Paragraph 59.9 of *the Guide* says that doctors should not accept gifts (including hospitality) from pharmaceutical, medical devices or other commercial companies. However, doctors can accept reasonable fees for any work they do as part of a contractual arrangement with a commercial company.

Is it acceptable for doctors to attend promotional or sponsored educational meetings?

A ‘promotional meeting’ is a meeting held by a pharmaceutical, medical devices or other commercial company to teach doctors about a particular new drug or device. In general, promotional meetings do not give objective educational information and doctors should not use them for continuing professional development (CPD) points unless the event has been approved by a professional body.

The Guide also advises doctors not to rely solely on promotional literature from pharmaceutical companies for information about particular drugs and to seek independent, evidence-based sources of information on the benefits and risks before prescribing. Useful resources for independent, evidence-based information are the Irish Medicines Board (www.imb.ie) and the National Medicines Information Centre (www.nmic.ie).

3. Code of Marketing Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry (7th Edition 2008), published by the Irish Pharmaceutical Health Care Association (IPHA), 2008

This code fully reflects the standards of the 2007 edition of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) Code on the promotion of prescription only medicines and interactions with healthcare professionals (the IPHA is a member of the EFPIA). This code covers all aspects of the relationships between the pharmaceutical companies, their employees and medical practitioners in relation to information provision, samples, gifts, sponsorship, hospitality, educational grants, use of consultants, market research etc.

4. Regulations for the Control of Advertising of Medicinal Products (2007)

This statutory instrument lays out the regulations for advertising and promoting the sale of medicinal products. These regulations state that doctors may accept reasonable hospitality and gifts from pharmaceutical, medical devices or other commercial companies as long as this happens at sales promotion or other professional or scientific events and as long as the level of hospitality is limited to the main purpose of the event.

5. Relationships with Pharmaceutical and other Commercial Organisations (2008), The Royal College of Psychiatrists College Report, CR148

This provides guidance for individual psychiatrists, College activities and research undertaken by psychiatrists. In relation to individual psychiatrists, this document aims to provide guidance on the boundaries of good practice for psychiatrists in their relationship with pharmaceutical companies and other commercial organisations as well as to help psychiatrists achieve probity and transparency ensuring that their judgement is not inappropriately influenced by commercial organisations. Key principles are transparency, full declaration of relationships with commercial organisation and the need to educate trainees to ensure good practice in their interactions with commercial organisations.

6. The College of Psychiatry of Ireland Professional Competence for Psychiatrists including CPD and Clinical Audit (June 2011)

The provisions of Part II of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 which came into effect on 1st May 2011, places a legal requirement on doctors to maintain their professional competence. Psychiatrists are now required to enrol in a professional competence scheme (PCS) accredited by the Medical Council. The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland has been approved by the Medical Council to run PCS for psychiatrists.

The College of Psychiatrists's handbook describes the role of the Professional Competence Committee in the certification process and Appendix 7 gives details of how meetings are accredited with the following points included:

- Meetings which are organised and funded by a pharmaceutical company cannot be approved for external CPD credits.

- Meetings which are organised by clinicians, with unrestricted funding from a pharmaceutical company, can be submitted to the College of Psychiatrists for approval for external CPD credits.
- Where there is a pharmaceutical company sponsorship, through an unrestricted educational grant, presentations must not contain any promotional content.
- Promotional logos/branding cannot be included on any presentation slides or on meeting invitations, flyers etc.
- Speakers must include a declaration of interest slide at the start of their presentation.
- Publicity material for sponsored meetings must not carry branding or logos of commercial sponsors.

Recommendations

Information and Guidance for Psychiatrists and Trainees:

1. The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland will make available all referenced documents to its membership online.
2. Psychiatrists should appraise themselves of the contents of the documents cited above.
3. Psychiatrists should ensure that they adhere to the 'Medical Councils Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners (7th edition 2009)' in this area as per Section E subsection 59.
4. Psychiatrists attending internal or external activities as part of their professional competence activities should ensure that the educational component of such activities is not influenced by pharmaceutical companies.
5. All education for trainees is provided through schemes overseen by the College. The College has a commitment not to use pharmaceutical company funding for any educational activities, meetings, journal clubs presentations or competitions.
6. Psychiatrists should ensure that information relating to pharmaceutical products be provided as per the IPHA Code. They should not rely solely on promotional literature from pharmaceutical companies for information about particular drugs and to seek independent, evidence-based sources of information on the benefits and risks before prescribing. Useful resources for independent, evidence-based information are in the Irish Medicines Board (www.imb.ie) and the National Medicines Information Centre (www.nmic.ie).
7. Psychiatrists who are educational supervisors for trainees should provide guidance and leadership in relation to trainees' interaction with pharmaceutical companies and the appropriate settings for such meetings.
8. Psychiatrists should only agree to participate in pharmaceutical company sponsored meetings (as speakers or attendees) if they are satisfied that the meetings have an entirely educational (rather than promotional) purpose and are sponsored through an unrestricted educational grant.

College Activities and their Relationship with Pharmaceutical Industry:

1. The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland should at all times be transparent in its dealings with the pharmaceutical industry.
2. The College will not accept any funding for academic meetings or activities of the College.
3. The College Professional Competency Committee has Guidelines in relation to the accreditation of meetings.
4. The College will increase awareness and provide information to trainees in respect of best practise in this area.
5. Research undertaken on behalf of the College should not have pharmaceutical funding.
6. Officers of the College will be requested to declare any funding received from pharmaceutical companies and any other relevant information regarding their dealings with industry.
7. Presentations at College meeting, publications in College journals, and elearning material, will be accompanied by a declaration of all sponsorship received.
8. The College logo should not be used on printed material alongside the logo of any pharmaceutical company.
9. Any College competitions or awards given by the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland should not be funded by a pharmaceutical industry.

Guidance to Academic Psychiatrists and NCHDs in research:

1. Funding received from pharmaceutical companies should be to promote research.
2. There should be full declaration and transparency of the relationship in any such research with the pharmaceutical organisations.
3. Psychiatrists participating in research should not receive personal payment for carrying out commercially funded research.
4. Presentations associated with pharmaceutical industry sponsored research must declare any conflict of interest to meeting organisers at the outset.
5. Participants in any pharmaceutically funded research should be given all information required to facilitate fully informed written consent to be obtained prior to their enrolment in any such research.
6. Researchers must be free to publish all valid findings of any research undertaken.

References:

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- ⁸ The Royal College of Psychiatrist College Report, CR148.
- ⁹ The Medical Council Guide to Professional Conduct and ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners (2009).
- ¹⁰ The Medical Council Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners. Relationship between doctors and industry - Frequently Asked Questions (October 2012).
- ¹¹ Irish Medicines Board (www.imb.ie).
- ¹² National Medicines Information Centre (www.nmic.ie).