



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

RACGP Sponsorship Policy

AIM

This policy outlines the RACGP's policy in relation to sponsorship of RACGP activities and events.

SCOPE

Traditionally sponsorship within the health care sector has been from pharmaceutical companies and medical device / supply companies. This policy relates to any organisation that seeks to work with the RACGP.

This policy does not cover endorsement of products or services. This is subject to processes outlined at <http://www.racgp.org.au/document.asp?id=12736>

BACKGROUND

The RACGP is the respected national leader in setting and maintaining the standards for quality practice, education, training and research in Australian general practice.

In furthering its role, the RACGP conducts a range of activities and has a variety of relationships with other organisations. These activities range from policy development to the delivery of products and services to general practitioners, registrars and others.

Commercial organisations often seek to be involved in College activities or more generally in general practice through sponsorship of educational products, activities and other events. The RACGP also actively seeks our relationships with others in recognition of the benefits such relationships bring in the achievement of the RACGP's purpose. Those benefits may include:

- Unifying the profession through relationships with like minded groups;
- Enabling a stronger advocacy voice in association with others;
- Enhancing the RACGP's credibility with other parties;
- Providing financial and human resources to support RACGP activities;
- Providing skills and capabilities that the RACGP does not possess; and
- Providing additional membership services.

Activities or relationships that undermine the RACGP's reputation of professionalism, independence and quality are to be avoided, not only for their own sake but also because a diminishment of the RACGP's reputation impedes its ability to achieve its purpose.



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

The principles section of this policy have been developed to help guide decisions about the kinds of activities the RACGP undertakes and about its relationships with other parties, with the objective of ensuring the integrity and good reputation of the RACGP.

Separate documentation; in the form of Standardised Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been/will be developed to implement the principles, which will include the preparation of sub documentation on applying the principles to specific areas. For example, a Faculty SOP is attached.

RELATED POLICIES

This policy position should be read in association with the:

1. RACGP Acceptance of Gifts Policy. (<http://www.racgp.org.au/document.asp?id=516>) which remains operational and outlines the preferred relationship between general practitioners and sponsoring organisations.
2. Medicines Australia Code of Conduct (<http://www.medicinesaustralia.com.au/>).
3. AMA Code of Ethics (<http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5WW598>)
4. The RACGP Delegations Policy that outlines the financial limits of authority for senior staff.

This policy position supersedes the General Practice Education Australia's Sponsorship Policy.

DEFINITIONS

In considering sponsorship, the following definitions apply:

A *sponsor* is a business enterprise aiming to use its marketing budget more effectively to directly target a key audience with its messages.

Sponsorship is:

- A negotiated agreement between the RACGP and the sponsor, where the RACGP receives either funds, goods or services from the sponsor.
- The RACGP providing the sponsor with publicity or other benefits in return for the funds, goods or services received.
- Part of a planned approach by the RACGP, not an ad hoc donation or gift of funds, goods or services by an enterprise.

A *sponsorship agreement* is a written document produced by the RACGP outlining:



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

- The funds, goods or services the sponsor agrees to provide.
- The publicity or benefits the RACGP agrees to provide.
- The length of time the sponsorship is valid.
- Any terms and conditions of the sponsorship.

A *sponsorship proposal* is targeted documentation sent to sponsors and potential sponsors and includes:

- Information about the proposed sponsored event/activity including:
 - Purpose of the event/activity
 - Members likely to attend the event/activity
 - Location of the event/activity
 - Guests/speakers of interest at the event/activity
 - Benefits of sponsoring the event/activity
- The sponsorship monies (or value of goods or services) being sought, and the publicity or benefits the College agrees to provide to the sponsor.
- Information about the RACGP, where applicable
- A Confirmation of Sponsorship form

The SOP includes specific details on the each of these aspects.

PRINCIPLES

The RACGP rigorously and actively pursues its mission and seek out relationships with others to achieve its goals. However, any activities or relationships that could tarnish the integrity or reputation of RACGP or the medical profession or that would diminish the trust placed in them should be avoided.

1. Conformity with RACGP Purpose



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

The activity or relationship should further or support the RACGP's purpose as outlined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and elaborated in its objects, vision and mission. These can be summarised as:

- Establishing and maintaining high standards of learning, skills and conduct in general practice;
- Encouraging and assisting research, training, education and other activities that improve the knowledge and skills and raises the standards of learning within general practice;
- Publishes or supports the publication of resources related to general practice; and
- Promotes collegiality among members. www.racgp.org.au/folder.asp?id=407

The RACGP's role is explicitly and widely agreed upon.

The RACGP holds itself to be, and encourages reliance that it is, an organisation that pursues its specified purposes.

Activities and relationships that do not further or support the RACGP's purposes have the potential to thwart these purposes in a number of ways, including inadequate accountability, inappropriate use of resources, unconstrained exercise of merely private judgment or inappropriate self-interest.

2. Medical professionalism and ethics

The activity or relationship should be consistent with general practice professionalism, the AMA Code of Ethics <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5WW598>

and RACGP Acceptance of Gifts Policy. <http://www.racgp.org.au/document.asp?id=516>

- The RACGP is an association of general practitioners and associates.
- When the RACGP acts, it represents the general practice profession.
- The RACGP's actions reflect upon the general practice profession.
- The RACGP's stature and reputation are inextricably linked to the general practice profession's work, the professional stature of its member practitioners and the trust Australians place in their general practitioner.



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

- Engaging in activities or relationships that are inconsistent with general practice professionalism and AMA Code of Ethics would erode trust in the RACGP.

The RACGP also supports the principles detailed in the Medicines Australia Code of Conduct (<http://www.medicinesaustralia.com.au/>). Where this code of practice is in conflict with the current policies of the RACGP, the latter prevails.

3. Independence

The activity or relationship should not undermine the RACGP's independence.

- To be a credible voice and influence and to be worthy of the trust and confidence of general practice and of the public, the RACGP should be, and be seen to be, free of undue influence and in control of the decisions it makes.
- Undue influence occurs when one is induced to do or not do something that is contrary to what one would otherwise do if left to act freely. Undue influence deprives one of free agency and destroys free will such that it is rendered more the will of another than of one's own.
- Activities and relationships that may undermine independence include:
 - i. Activities or relationships that provide revenue or benefit to the RACGP such that ongoing dependency on the revenue or benefit impedes independence
 - ii. Activities and relationships that create a product or service that is seen to be associated with the RACGP but over which the RACGP does not have final control or veto or the capacity to extricate itself

4. Consistency with policy

The activity or relationship should be consistent with RACGP policy.

- The RACGP develops policy in pursuance of its purpose and mission; these should be referred to when making decisions in connection with activities or relationships.

5. Conflicting goals and activities



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Relationships with parties whose goals or activities directly conflict with the RACGP's objects, mission or vision should be avoided.

- This does not preclude discussion with others or participation in events for the purposes of obtaining information, monitoring or lobbying.

6. Transparency

Professional autonomy, independence and commitment to the scientific method must be maintained in any relationship between the RACGP and a sponsoring organisation. Sponsorships will be named and acknowledged. The terms and conditions of the activity or relationship should be transparent.

- Transparency promotes openness to scrutiny and serves to enhance accountability and to discourage relationships or activities that could be considered problematic.
- The principle is generally applicable except in connection to matters related to competitive advantage, trade secret or a reasonable agreement of confidentiality.

7. Compliance and accountability

Processes must be in place to ensure that proposed and ongoing activities or relationships are appropriately reviewed for compliance with and clear accountability for these principles.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years.

CONCLUSION

The RACGP manages sponsorship as a principled and strategic approach of mutual benefit to members.

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