

THE COLLEGE OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
OF CANADA



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Quick Tips:

Identification and Management of Conflicts of Interest and Transparency to Learners

For presenters and planning committee members
of Mainpro-accredited programs and events

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What is conflict of interest? Why is it important?

Conflict of interest exists when an individual, whether a member of a planning committee or a presenter, has an opportunity to influence the content of an educational event through the mention or promotion of products or services of a commercial interest with which he or she has relationship, or through the omission of mentioning competing products or services.

The purpose of identifying and addressing potential conflicts of interest is to ensure proper balance, independence, objectivity, and scientific rigor for educational activities.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) does not view the existence of a financial relationship itself as necessarily implying bias or decreasing the value of an individual's participation in a CME/CPD activity. However, when actual or potential conflicts of interest are identified, organizers and presenters must ensure that they are appropriately addressed.

Who should disclose conflicts of interest? What should be disclosed?

Anyone in a position to control the content of a CME/CPD activity should disclose any and all potential conflicts of interest that are relevant to the content of the presentation and resolve them prior to the CME/CPD activity. The CFPC requires all members of planning committees and presenters to complete the [CFPC Mainpro Declaration of Conflict of Interest](#).

The following are examples of potential conflicts of interest:

- Any direct financial interest in a commercial entity such as a pharmaceutical organization, medical device company, or communications firm (“the Organization”) with relevance to the presentation
- Investments held in the Organization
- Membership on the Organization’s advisory board or similar committee
- Current or recent participation in a clinical trial sponsored by the Organization
- Member of a speakers’ bureau connected to the Organization
- Any other paid relationship with the Organization
- Holding a patent for a product referred to in the CME/CPD activity or marketed by a commercial organization

Organizers of CME/CPD activities can prevent or reduce the risk of conflict of interest by selecting planning committee members and presenters who do not have relationships to commercial interests related to the content. They may also assign to the presenter aspects of the content that do not place the presenter in a potential conflict of interest.

I think there might be a conflict of interest; now what?

Once a conflict of interest is identified, organizers of a CME/CPD event must determine if the conflict of interest can be practically managed. If it cannot, organizers will need to select another presenter; in the case of a planning committee member, he or she will need to be replaced.

Appropriate mechanisms for resolution can include a) altering control over content or b) independent content validation.

a) Altering control over content

- Choose someone else to present the part of the content that is problematic
- Change the focus of the CME activity so that the content is not about the products or services of the commercial interest, if that is the basis of the conflict of interest
- Limit the content presented by the person in question to a report of the data without providing recommendations; another presenter can be assigned to address broader implications and recommendations
- Limit the sources for recommendations. Limit the role of the presenter in question to reporting recommendations based on formal structured reviews of the literature, along with a clear statement of the inclusion and exclusion criteria; that is, present information that is explicitly “evidence-based” rather than reporting personal recommendations or selecting the evidence to be presented

b) Independent content validation

Conflict of interest may be resolved if the CME/CPD material is peer reviewed; all the recommendations involving clinical medicine are based on evidence that is accepted within the profession; and all scientific research referred to, reported, or used in the CME/CPD activity in support or justification of patient care recommendations conforms to the generally accepted standards.

Determining the right course of action can be facilitated by asking a few useful questions:

- How were the topics and the presenter for the activity determined?
- What content is expected to be included in the presentation?
- Will the presenter be making clinical recommendations?
- What sources of evidence will support the presentation?

Organizers of CME/CPD activities should maintain documentation of the resolution of conflict of interest in their files.

Transparency to learners

CME/CPD event organizers and presenters must take steps that would allow participants to make independent judgments on the relationships identified and management strategies employed to deal with any conflicts of interest.

At the start of each activity accredited by the CFPC, **program facilitators must present a three-slide conflict of interest declaration:**

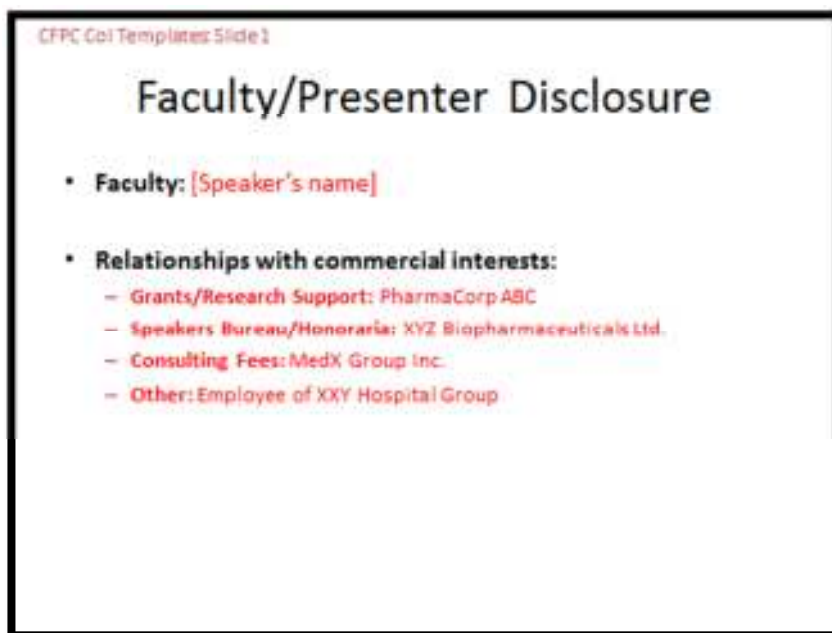
- **Slide 1 – Faculty/Presenter Disclosure:** Personal relationships with commercial interests (one slide per faculty member/presenter).
- **Slide 2 – Program Disclosure of Commercial Support:** Specific outline of connections/support for development/presentation of the program from commercial entities or organizations including educational grants, in-kind services (eg, logistics) *AND* specific aspects of the faculty/presenter connections that a reasonable program participant might consider relevant to the presentation, (eg, products made by companies named in Slide 1 that could be germane to the presentation).
- **Slide 3 – Mitigation of Bias:** Description of measures taken to deal with and mitigate potential sources of bias in the presentation.

These slides are to be **visually and verbally presented to the audience**. Sufficient time **MUST** be allowed for the audience to read and comprehend the information being shared. There must be an opportunity for the audience to ask questions about the disclosure should they arise.

Templates provided by the CFPC must be used (see below); however, colours and slide themes may be modified to match that of the program.

Instructions:

- Examples are shown below; text in red font is to be modified by provider as per the program.
- Where a faculty/presenter has no relationships to disclose, simply indicate “Not Applicable” under the heading “Relationships with Commercial Interests” on Slide 1.
- Where a program has received no commercial support (this includes monies for food, logistics assistance such as registration, AV set-up, etc.), simply indicate “No Commercial Support” on Slide 2.
- Where there are no potential biases identified in Slides 1 AND 2, simply indicate “Not Applicable” on Slide 3.



Disclosure of Commercial Support

- This program has received financial support from [organization name] in the form of [describe support here – e.g. an educational grant].
- This program has received in-kind support from [organization name] in the form of [describe support here – e.g. logistical support].
- **Potential for conflict(s) of interest:**
 - [Speaker/Faculty name] has received [payment/funding, etc.] from [organization supporting this program AND/OR] organization whose product(s) are being discussed in this program].
 - [Supporting organization name] [developed/licenses/distributes/benefits from the sale of, etc.] a product that will be discussed in this program: [insert generic and brandname here].

Mitigating Potential Bias

- [Explain how potential sources of bias identified in slides 1 and 2 have been mitigated].
- Refer to "Quick Tips" document

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