

Pharmaceutical companies as the funding sources for continuing medical education

Sir,

Continuing medical education (CME) is essential to keep medical practitioners abreast with the latest research and developments in their specialties, and thus, updating their knowledge. The debatable issue however is about the source of funding to attend these CMEs and the expectations arising out of that. A recently published paper by Venkataraman *et al.*^[1] and a follow-up correspondence^[2] on funding sources for CME make some very interesting observations and thus, are useful additions to the literature. The sources and extent of funding may vary in different setups and are subject to the prevailing regulations. Thus, it becomes essential to highlight on the prevailing regulations with regard to the funding by pharmaceutical companies for attending conferences, seminars, workshops, and CME programs in India.

The Medical Council of India (MCI), is a statutory body that is entrusted with the responsibility of establishing and maintaining high standards of medical education and to ensure quality medical care to the citizens in India. To achieve its aim, the MCI lays down rules and regulations from time to time that are subject to periodic amendments. The amendment notification from the MCI adds certain regulations to amend the "Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002. These Regulations called the "Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) (Amendment) Regulations, 2009 - Part-I" makes additions in Chapter 6 that deals with unethical acts. The newly added clause 6.8 mentions about "Code of conduct for doctors and professional association of doctors in their relationship with pharmaceutical and allied health sector industry," and in the sub clause 6.8.1 (b) clearly states that "A medical practitioner shall not accept any travel facility inside the country

or outside, including rail, air, ship, cruise tickets, paid vacations etc., from any pharmaceutical or allied healthcare industry or their representatives for self and family members for vacation or for attending conferences, seminars, workshops, CME program etc., as a delegate." Sub clauses 6.8.1 (a) and (c) also discourages a medical practitioner from receiving any gifts and hospitality respectively. A medical practitioner is expected to follow and adhere to the stipulations mentioned in the amendments, or else his/her actions will be construed as unethical.^[3] These regulations came into force from the date of their publication in the Official Gazette on December 14th, 2009.

Just like CMEs and workshops are the sources for recent advances, well-read journals such as Indian Journal of Critical Care Medicine are not far behind in dissemination of latest research and information in the field. Many of the rules, regulations, guidelines and amendments associated with the practice of medicine are likely to be missed by the medical practitioners at large and thus, a need to increase awareness on these important issues as well. Ignorance about such amendments can unnecessarily pose problems for the medical practitioners. This correspondence is thus, aimed at increasing the awareness regarding the aforementioned specific amendments and guidelines for the elite readership of the journal.

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