

CONDUCTING VIRTUAL MEETINGS

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Virtual meetings are permitted under the code
- Hospitality may be provided at virtual meetings, however it should be moderate and reasonable
- Information must be current, accurate, balanced, and scientifically valid
- All events must uphold the integrity and reputation of the industry
- Companies should act responsibly in disseminating information during times of crisis.

With technology improving rapidly, and connectivity increasing, many companies are conducting virtual engagements and interactions with healthcare professionals. These activities include video sales calls, remote or tele-detailing, virtual meetings, and online conferences.

The Overarching Principles of Edition 19 of the Code of Conduct apply to educational meetings, regardless of the method of delivery.

HOSPITALITY

It is appropriate to provide hospitality to a healthcare professional at their place of work during a sales call. All events must comply with Overarching Principle 9, and Section 4.5 of Edition 19 of the Code. Hospitality must be reasonable and appropriate, and therefore upholding the integrity and reputation of the industry. Therefore:

- › It is appropriate to use a meal delivery service to provide hospitality to a healthcare professional in their workplace during their workday. This should be done with the presence of a company staff member (whether physically or virtually) or in conjunction with a formal educational activity (such as a webinar, journal club, or grand rounds)
- › It is not appropriate to provide hospitality to a healthcare professional in the absence of a company staff member (whether physically or virtually), and without educational balance.
- › Hospitality should not be provided to a healthcare professional in their own home. This is irrespective of whether they are participating in a webinar or other form of educational activity.

ONLINE CONFERENCES

It is permissible for companies to host or sponsor educational conferences, symposia, and scientific meetings that are fully online. The principles of providing current, balanced, accurate and scientific valid information still apply. Events that were traditionally held face-to-face can be moved into an online environment. Companies will need to be mindful of:

- › Access to these activities should be for verified healthcare professionals only. This means making sure video conferencing tools can be locked down for registered delegates only.
- › Promotional messages must be relevant to the target audience.
- › Unapproved products and indications should not be promoted. Educational messages can be shared in the spirit of scientific exchange, however this must be approved by Medical teams and not a commercial function.

Moving to online congresses makes access to global information much easier. Companies must still be aware of delegate locations to ensure that product promotion is relevant to the audience. Products should not be promoted unless there are attendees from a location where the product is registered. Educational information regarding unapproved products and information can be shared with healthcare professionals, using Section 8 of Edition 19 as a guide.

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ACCESSING INFORMATION ONLINE

Consistent with Section 4 of Edition 19 of the Code of Conduct, when conducting these activities virtually, companies must ensure that promotion is restricted to healthcare professional audiences only. Meetings that will contain promotional claims about prescription products must be directed to verified healthcare professionals only. This includes restricted passwords, moderation, and validation steps to ensure compliance with these requirements.

RESPONSIBILITY

Companies are reminded of obligations under the Therapeutic Goods Act, as well as the Spam Act.

In times of increased activity, Medicines Australia has received complaints and comments where healthcare professionals are seeing not only the increase of virtual meetings, but also an increase in promotional emails and hard copy materials delivered by mail. This is particularly heightened during global pandemic situations such as COVID-19 in 2020. During this time, active outreach not relating to the crisis have been labelled as insensitive and diverting resources away from more immediate priorities.

Companies should consider the intended audience, and the calls on their time. Alignment across all business units to unify these activities within a company is essential. Companies should consider the urgency of the information being shared, and how it supports the quality use of medicines during this time.

IF IN DOUBT, REACH OUT

For a confidential discussion on how to comply with the Code of Conduct, please contact the Code Help Desk— codehelpdesk@medaus.com.au



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