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CFPC's managed relationship with the health care and pharmaceutical industry: update



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Dear Colleagues,

In 2013 the CFPC board approved the report "The CFPC's Relationship with the Health Care/Pharmaceutical Industry"¹ (HPI). The report included 20 recommendations addressing conflicts of interest, financial relationships, marketing, and access to information. The CFPC board set short-, medium-, and long-term goals for managing relationships with HPI to address the key principles of trust, transparency, independence, accountability, and fairness. It mandated that relevant staff and committees overseeing Family Medicine Forum (FMF), *Canadian Family Physician* (CFP), and continuing professional development (CPD) report regularly on the implementation of the task force recommendations. The following is a summary of the report for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Family Medicine Forum. Continuous improvements have been made to ensure there is no influence from HPI on Mainpro+ certified education at FMF. This is ensured by the independence of the FMF committee; guidelines for presenters and careful review and management of their declared conflicts of interest; and audits to monitor quality and adherence to Mainpro+ standards. All educational content continues to be separate from the exhibit hall, which is promoted as a marketing area with clear disclaimers. There is a strict exhibitor and sponsor code of conduct that is monitored and enforced, and the exhibit hall offers a clearly marked, HPI-free main aisle for direct access to food. In 2017, 14% of the overall revenue for FMF was derived from HPI, which was unchanged from 2016. At FMF 2017, 41% of exhibitor revenue was from HPI, down from 44% in 2016.

Canadian Family Physician. Revenue for CFP from HPI is transparent. Advertising rates are posted on cfp.ca. Pharmaceutical advertising in CFP provided 28.3% of its total revenue in 2017-2018, down considerably from 47.5% in 2016-2017. Several factors are at play in medical journal advertising, which has experienced a steady decline in recent years. There is declining consumption of print media; most pharmaceutical research and advertising is directed to medications usually prescribed by Royal College specialists; fewer "me too" products are being launched, as they are unlikely to get formulary listing; and most primary care prescriptions are now filled by generic products. Although CFP is the leading journal devoted to Canadian family practice, relevant content is also found in other journals with which CFP competes for advertising revenue.

Continuing professional development. In 2017-2018 the CFPC and its Chapters received \$79800 in total revenue from

HPI sources related to Mainpro+, which made up 9.8% of total CPD revenue. This was down from 12.6% in the previous year. Several important changes have been implemented with the National Standard for Support of Accredited CPD Activities,² which came into effect in January 2018. The standard was developed and endorsed by the CFPC, the Royal College, and the Collège des médecins du Québec. Industry and their representatives are no longer eligible to submit programs directly for Mainpro+ certification, which will reduce the CFPC's HPI revenue for CPD to zero. In addition, our national committee on CPD has directed that Mainpro+ participants can no longer claim non-certified CPD credits for activities directly funded, hosted, or developed by HPI (so-called drug dinners). In championing the new CPD standard, the CFPC's main goal has been to safeguard the integrity of certified CPD activities from the influence of sponsoring organizations that could lead to bias.

Overall, the CFPC receives modest and generally declining revenues from HPI. This reflects our active policy development and enforcement that has strengthened restrictions governing the role and potential influence of HPI. Indeed, a recent peer-reviewed publication found that the CFPC has the strongest policies regarding HPI of 60 Canadian professional medical associations that were assessed.³

The trend toward declining HPI revenues creates a financial gap that poses a challenge for the members and leaders of the CFPC. For example, it has been determined that for CFP to gain full financial independence, a \$45 increase in membership fees would be required. Increases in FMF registration fees would also likely be needed to offset the 14% of revenues currently received from HPI. Preliminary results from the FMF 2018 attendee survey indicate that 19% of respondents thought that HPI exhibitors should be eliminated, while 69% endorsed the current approach. Further, 69% of 750 survey participants indicated they were not willing to pay approximately \$300 extra in registration fees for FMF to become HPI free.

The CFPC is active in monitoring and managing its relationship with HPI, with modest and declining revenues from that source overall. Content in CFP continues to be independent of HPI, as is certified educational content at FMF. The new national CPD standard is robust. It has considerably reduced the risk of influence from HPI on CPD content and has also eliminated revenues from HPI to the CFPC for Mainpro+. We look forward, in the weeks and months to come, to engaging our elected leaders, as well as you, in this conversation. 🌿

References

1. CFPC. *The CFPC's relationship with the health care/pharmaceutical industry*. Mississauga, ON: CFPC; 2013.
2. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, CFPC, Collège des médecins du Québec. *National standard for support of accredited CPD activities*. Mississauga, ON: CFPC; 2017.
3. Shnier A, Lexchin J. Continuing medical education and pharmaceutical industry involvement: an evaluation of policies adopted by Canadian professional medical associations. *Int J Risk Saf Med* 2017;29(1-2):1-16.

Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 79.