



IFPMA Note for Guidance on Sponsorship of Events and Meetings

Introduction

The *Ethos* of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) is centered on *trust* to “act with integrity and honesty to improve patient care and build trust with those we serve and to respect the independence of healthcare providers, patients and other stakeholders”.

Advancing medical knowledge and improving global public health remains a priority for IFPMA representing the research-based pharmaceutical industry. Collaborations between healthcare professionals (HCPs) and the pharmaceutical industry are essential and ensure that patients have access to the medicines they need and that healthcare professionals have up-to-date comprehensive information about the diseases they treat and the medicines they prescribe. IFPMA members remain committed to activities that provide scientific and educational content to healthcare professionals and advance their medical knowledge and expertise.

These activities may take place through various means and media.

The IFPMA Code of Practice sets global standards for industry business practices and includes guiding principles of ethical conduct and promotion as well as requirements for the promotion of medicines to healthcare professionals and interactions with healthcare professionals and other stakeholders. The pharmaceutical industry provides various types of support for a wide range of local, national, and international meetings including funding to assist in the medical education of healthcare professionals, provision of sponsorship agreements to medical societies organizing events, hiring of exhibition space, support of speakers etc. Pharmaceutical companies are involved in the medical education through company specific meetings, and by supporting meetings organized by other parties. These activities are covered by Article 7 (Events and Meetings) of the IFPMA Code. The prime reason for attendees to attend such meetings should be the educational value and no other factors such as the location, venue, hospitality or timing of the meeting. The choice of location and venue must be appropriate, conducive to the educational objectives and modest. In determining whether to support an event, consideration should be given to the educational program, overall cost, facilities offered by the venue, justification for the location, nature of the audience, hospitality and for certain situations, security arrangements. The overall impression given by all the various arrangements should be kept in mind. Pharmaceutical companies might find it helpful to clearly document the reasons as to why they decide to support or run a meeting. Member Associations' codes and member companies' policies and procedures are often even more prescriptive than the IFPMA Code in relation to arrangements for meetings.

The purpose of this document is to provide more information in relation to relevant requirements of the IFPMA Code of Practice. In this respect, the guidance intends to:

- assist all stakeholders, including pharmaceutical companies, member associations, other national trade associations, medical societies, third party event organizers, etc., in the factors to consider when determining whether locations and venues are appropriate, for meetings organized by pharmaceutical companies or third parties such as medical societies and
- provide direction for pharmaceutical companies in the process of assessing the appropriateness of their own meetings and their involvement in supporting meetings organized by others (third party, e.g. congresses, events), such as medical societies, (e.g. by sponsorship of expert speakers or other type of assistance such as providing a grant, renting exhibition space, etc.).
- Propose criteria to consider when supporting healthcare professionals to attend these educational events

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1. Congresses and Events Assessment Considerations

a. Criteria to consider when assessing the appropriateness of the Location of an Event (non-exhaustive)

- The geographical location is ideally in or near a city or town, which is a recognized scientific or business center and is easily accessible for the intended audience.
- The location should aim to minimize travel for the majority of attendees and take security considerations into account.
- The location should not be primarily known for its touristic or recreational offering and if for some reason it is, it should be demonstrated that out of touristic or recreational season it is an appropriate location for scientific or business meetings;
- The location should not be the main attraction of the event or be perceived as such.
- The time of the event should not coincide with local or internationally recognized sporting or cultural events taking place in the same location, at the same time and preferably not just before or just after the meeting.
- The location is appropriate in respect to the geographical scope of the event (e.g. a European congress should not take place outside of Europe).

Note: Capital cities and other large metropolitan cities considered commercial hubs are likely to be reasonable and appropriate locations for meetings. The appropriateness of a location may be assessed differently for strictly local events attended by local healthcare professionals as opposed to regional or international events. The program for an event may justify a particular location if there are valid and reasonable reasons for that location such as the availability of relevant expertise, for example, research facilities.

b. Criteria to consider when assessing the appropriateness of a Venue of an Event (non-exhaustive)

The venue must be conducive to the scientific and educational purpose of the meeting.

- The venue has the necessary business and technical facilities to accommodate the meeting and its participants.
- The meeting facilities should only be accessible to the intended audience.
- In the case of cities, which are both major scientific or business centers and locations highly desirable for tourists, it is important to select venues, which are away from the main tourist spots.
- The venue must not be renowned for its entertainment, sports, leisure or vacation facilities (e.g. golf club, health spas, beach /river/ lakeside locations or casino) and if for some reason it is, companies should be able to demonstrate that the venue remains appropriate for scientific, educational and business meetings. The venue should not be the main attraction of the event or be perceived as such.
- The venue provides safe & secure accommodation when considering the chosen location.
- The venue must not be lavish even if the cost is low compared to other venues. (E.g. ranking by the tourism department of the country and/or the average ranking by travel agencies can help with this assessment).

c. Criteria to consider when deciding the company level support of an event organized by a third party such as a medical society (non-exhaustive):

It is not for IFPMA to decide whether third parties (e.g. medical society, groups of pharmacies or physicians) can organize events for their members and other healthcare professionals that include entertainment, and/or take place in locations known for leisure facilities, and/or do not have a reputable strong, credible scientific program.

If, however, pharmaceutical companies consider providing a financial contribution whatever the format (e.g. supporting healthcare professionals' participation, supporting the organization of the event, renting a booth), the following questions should be considered.

i. Scientific Program (Article 7.1.1 of the IFPMA Code)

If the answer to any of the questions below is 'no', then pharmaceutical companies should consider obtaining further information or suggesting amendments before agreeing to any involvement with the meeting.

- Is the scientific program available on the event organizer's website well in advance of the meeting?
- Does the scientific program cover the whole duration of the event with content generally filling the business hours each day?
- Is the program content scientifically grounded and adapted to the targeted audience?
- Do the congress format and education sessions set-up reflect the changing needs of audience and demographic shift?
- Do the congress format and education sessions and areas take into account the audience (HCPs, Patient Organizations and others) to represent the disease and treatment in fair, balanced and scientific manner broadly?
- Is the scientific content as well available via digital solutions to enable broader reach?
- If local rules require it, is the exhibition of RX advertising be separated from the access of the general public?

ii. Entertainment, leisure activities, meals (Articles 7.1.5 and 7.1.6 of the IFPMA Code)

If the answer to any of the questions below is 'yes', then pharmaceutical companies should consider obtaining further information or suggesting amendments before agreeing to any involvement with the meeting.

- Is any entertainment (such as sightseeing tours or leisure activities) organized in connection with the event before, during or after it? Is there unreasonable or frequent traveling for meals during the event?
- Are meals arranged in tourist or heritage/cultural attractions?
- Are any of the descriptions on the program such that they appear to be excessive (e.g. champagne reception, gala dinner, etc.)?
- Is there an expectation that sponsoring companies fund such activities?
- If there is leisure activity, are they self-funded by the organizer?
- If there is leisure activity, is it planned in the day time during the congress?

Pharmaceutical companies should consider implementing contractual agreements with the third party organizer of the event (e.g. Medical society) stating that Industry funding is exclusively used for advancement of science and provision of medical education and not for activities like entertainment and ideally this should be clearly stated in the program and on the organisers web page. .

2. Sponsorship of HCPs (Article 7.2 of the IFPMA Code)

Some points for consideration when supporting HCPs to attend congresses:

- Is the invitation of HCPs to attend (sponsorship) based on a medical / scientific need of the HCP and independent of commercial considerations? How is it documented? Ideally this selection should be led by Medical.
- Companies need to ensure reasonableness for such support to HCPs (e.g. number of HCPs per event, number of invitations per HCP/year)
- Does the invitation acknowledge that the support is independent of any decision-making in favor of the company?

Please check national legal requirements to support HCPs to attend a congress as HCPs in some countries need to obtain employer consent before accepting.

3. Guests (Article 7.3 of the IFPMA Code)

If the program mentions accompanying persons/guests of the healthcare professional attendees, consider the following:

- Are they required to pay the full costs incurred by their participation (that is not subsidized by the pharmaceutical industry in any way)?
- Are healthcare professionals expected to participate in the meeting rather than encouraged to join any program for accompanying persons?
- Is it clear that attendees are not being encouraged to arrive before the meeting starts or stay on after it ends?

If the answer to any of the questions above is 'no', then pharmaceutical companies should consider obtaining further information or suggesting amendments before agreeing to any involvement with the meeting.

4. Other criteria to consider – Official meeting materials and websites

The description of the meeting is often an indicator of whether the location/venue and other arrangements are appropriate. Language about the event being located at “world renowned resort” with “beautiful beaches nearby” or other similar language is an indicator that the prime purpose may not be educational and the location/venue may not be appropriate. The following questions could be considered:

- Does the website focus purely on the educational merit of the meeting or does it promote tourism or hospitality as one of its attractions?
- Does the website mention pre or post event activities?
- Who is mentioned as a supporter of the event? Is it medical societies, or similar, or the local tourist board, etc.?

In addition, information on the proposed venue’s website may give a further indication of the suitability of the location/venue.

Existing Tools and Resources

In addition to the IFPMA Code, national and company codes, there are a number of existing tools and resources to assist companies in deciding whether to support a specific event.

- **EFPIA's e4ethics platform** - <http://www.efpia-e4ethics.eu>
- **MedTech Congress Assessment Platform** - <http://www.ethicalmedtech.eu/>
- **Farmaindustria Congress Assessment Platform** <http://www.codigofarmaindustria.org>
- **IPCAA Congress Healthcare Guidelines** – www.ipcaa.org