



## IFPMA Code of Practice 2019

### Q&A

#### *1) What is the IFPMA Code? Why was it established?*

The Code was born out of our industry's realization that when we are promoting our products we must consider the responsibility of healthcare professionals to their patients.

This led in 1981 to the creation of the IFPMA Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices, which was the first global self-regulation mechanism in the pharmaceutical industry.

Since this time the IFPMA Statutes require all member associations and companies to adhere to this global standard.

The Code is a complement to laws, regulations and official guidelines on medicines and healthcare. And therefore, self-regulation, also called "soft law", can sometimes be more restrictive than hard law.

#### *2) What is the role of the national Codes?*

Many national and regional associations rely on the IFPMA Code for their own codes of conduct, as IFPMA serves as a beacon for the whole sector.

Our national member associations have to abide by the global IFPMA Code, but usually include additional provisions to meet local requirements.

They handle alleged breaches that occur in their national territory under their own codes, but the IFPMA Code acts as a default for any complaints about the activities of member companies in countries where

- ✓ there is no national code,
- ✓ no appropriate regulations
- ✓ or where a member company is not part of the local association.



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*3) To whom does the IFPMA Code apply?*

As with all previous IFPMA Codes, the new Code applies to IFPMA's members and anyone acting on their behalf.

*4) Why have you updated the IFPMA Code?*

The Code of Practice is a living document, it has been updated 5 times so far. The first IFPMA Code was established in 1981, nearly 40 years ago. It was a first of its kind, setting a precedent for global self-regulation of industry practices.

The previous Code was issued in 2012. A lot has changed in the world since then and the R&D-based pharmaceutical industry, as well as the field of business ethics, continue to change and evolve.

Society's expectations - quite rightly - constantly raise the bar. Our industry needs to meet these expectations and live-up to its commitments.

That is why we started the current revision of the Code in 2016 and completed it after 2 years of hard work and consultation with our members from all over the world.

*5) What's new in the revised IFPMA Code?*

Overall, there are two important changes:

- ✓ First, several provisions have been updated, in particular the section on gifts and other items.
- ✓ Second, we have developed an IFPMA Ethos to replace our Guiding Principles. This change aims to shift from a rules-based approach to a Code based on values and above all, patients' trust.

Trust is integral to our 4 additional core values of care, fairness, respect and honesty. Our Ethos is the foundation of our decision-making process.

This represents a fundamental change in approach. We believe that by having an Ethos that underpins the rules, the new code will provide a more



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effective framework for our members to behave with integrity no matter how testing the circumstances.

### *6) In practice, what does this mean?*

The 2012 IFPMA Code already prohibited gifts for the personal benefit of the healthcare professionals, but now IFPMA members are banning any exceptions like customary gifts for significant national, cultural or religious events (for example mooncakes or condolence payments).

IFPMA members are also banning any promotional items related to prescription-only medicines for healthcare professionals' use in their offices (including post-its, calendars, diaries, and similar "reminder" items with company or product logos). The only items that can be provided to healthcare professionals – in the context of company organized events – are company-branded pens or notepads in order to take notes during the meeting. The aim is to avoid any perception of potential influence of an healthcare professional while prescribing pharmaceutical products. This concern is much lower with Over-The-Counter (OTC) products (when not prescribed by an healthcare professional), as patients make their own choice about what to buy. Therefore, promotional aids related to OTC products of minimal value and quantity can still be provided to healthcare professionals if relevant to their practice.

A new category of informational or educational items has been added. These are things like scientific books, journal subscriptions or memory sticks with educational data that may be provided to healthcare professionals for their own education or for the education of patients, provided that the items do not have independent value. Product branding is not allowed, in the same way as for items of medical utility (such as inhalers, or devices to learn how to self-inject).

### *7) What is the purpose of the note for guidance on sponsorship of events and meetings?*



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The purpose of this note for guidance (which is an update of the 2014 version) is to provide additional interpretation and further guidance towards the relevant provisions of the Code.

The note lists the criteria a company should consider in deciding whether it is appropriate to sponsor a particular event or meeting organized by a third party.

This note for guidance is not binding, but provides guidance on topics that often raise questions.

You can find this document on the [IFPMA website](#) for immediate use.

*8) What is the purpose of the note for guidance on fees for services?*

This new note for guidance has been developed to provide practical considerations regarding paid services by healthcare professionals, such as speaking arrangements, clinical trials and advisory boards.

This note for guidance is not binding, and can be downloaded on the [IFPMA website](#) for immediate use.

*9) When will the new IFPMA Code be implemented?*

The new IFPMA Code will come into effect on 1st January 2019.

We expect our members to incorporate the new provisions into their own codes by that date.

So members have between June and December 2018 to align their codes.

*10) Who should I contact if I have questions on the new IFPMA Code?*

Feel free to contact me (s.melis@ifpma.org), I will be happy to answer to your questions and support your organization to implement the new Code.



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**You can also get in touch with your organization's representative on our Ethics & Business Integrity Committee.**