

Guidelines for Commercial Support of ERS Meetings and ERS Sponsored Meetings

Preamble

The ERS, in agreement with the European Board for Accreditation in Pneumology (EBAP), recognises the necessity to define clear and fair rules for collaboration with Industrial parties. ERS believes in the ethical conduct of those involved in organising medical education and scientific activities. The following guidelines are meant to be a formal expression of basic principles acceptable by all parties.

All meeting organised, supported or sponsored by ERS must conform to the following rules. The ERS Executive Committee will not approve sponsorship of a meeting or event unless the Organisers have provided the appropriate documentations and information, as set out below.

Guidelines

Guiding principles

- An ERS sponsored or supported symposium, research seminar, congress or other related activities should have a scientific and educational purpose only, in case of ERS involvement. Promotion of specific industry products during the sessions is not permitted. If this principle is not respected, ERS will refuse further support or sponsorship to the Organiser.
- The Organiser has the exclusive right to design and to execute an ERS sponsored or supported scientific activity. This includes the definition of the scientific programme, choice of speakers and the content of the course.
- The industry partner granting financial support is not allowed to suggest speakers for the ERS sponsored or supported scientific activity with the exception of evening symposia at the Annual Congress, for which separate guidelines apply.
- A balanced presentation of the topic must be given in any ERS sponsored or supported scientific activity.
- Any supporting company will be acknowledged on scientific materials as having provided sponsorship.
- The supporting company must not use the ERS logo or its name in any of its own promotional activities. The company's support is acknowledged directly on the sponsored activity materials. The ERS sponsored or supported course or scientific materials are intended to serve specific educational purposes and cannot serve promotional activities of the supporting company.
- Educational or scientific material endorsed by ERS members should be produced independently. Any input from a company must be transparent and

clearly stated. It is not acceptable for material that has been influenced by a pharmaceutical company to appear to be independent.

- ERS members must not allow their names to be attached to any review, overview, chapter etc. related to the meeting that they have not written themselves, and should refuse offers of help in the form of first drafts or collation of references.
- Sponsorship of journal supplements and journals is acceptable but should be stated in an unambiguous manner.

Acknowledgement

- Educational support can be acknowledged in the ERS sponsored or supported scientific activity's promotional brochures, syllabus, final programme, and other scientific or course materials.
- Reference to specific products using trade names must be avoided. Marketing and branding should not occur, including in poster presentations.

Exhibits and promotion

- When commercial exhibits are part of an ERS sponsored or supported scientific activity, arrangements for the commercial exhibition shall not influence planning or interfere with the presentation of the scientific activity. Exhibit placement should not be a condition of support for a scientific activity.
- Promotional activities should not interfere with the scientific programme. No commercial promotional materials shall be displayed or distributed in the room immediately before, during, or immediately afterwards. The only form of promotion permitted is the acknowledgement that the company has contributed to the educational programme by way of a grant.
- Representatives of commercial supporters may attend an educational or scientific activity but may not engage in sales activities in the room where the activity takes place
- No industry meeting on the same topics, which may interfere with the scientific programme, can be organised by the sponsors in the same country as the event up to two days before and two days after the meeting. The same rule applies to all ERS educational or scientific activities apart from the ERS Annual Congress where the time limit is five days before and five days afterwards.

Commercially organised evening symposia and social events

- The ERS sponsored or supported scientific event/activity should be clearly distinguished from commercially organised sessions such as evening symposia.

- These and accompanying social events should not compete with, nor take precedence over the ERS supported or sponsored CME or scientific sessions.
- These and accompanying social events should not compete with, nor take precedence over official ceremonies or open official meetings, such as the ERS General Assembly, during the Annual Congress.

Meetings of the Steering, Executive, Scientific, Congress, Nomination or any other core committees of the Society are not eligible for any form of industry support, whether direct, indirect or individual.

Disclosure

- Speakers must disclose existing financial arrangements with any commercial company contributing to the scientific event.
- The Disclosure Form must be signed by Speakers and Organising/Scientific Committee members, be archived by the Organiser and be made available on request to participating members and the ERS Disclosure Report Committee.

Financial

Management of funds from commercial supporters

- The following forms of grant are recognised:
 - Unrestricted educational grants allow Organisers independent use of contributed funds for any purpose related to the meeting. In this situation, they receive funds from the commercial company and then pay all expenses.
 - Restricted grants to reimburse expenses are acceptable but must be clearly defined as follows: speakers (all expenses, travel only, accommodation only); support for catering; other expenses (e.g. printed materials, equipment loan etc.)
- In the case of restricted grants, the commercial supporter is not allowed to provide honoraria, accommodation or travel expenses for speakers or organisers beyond those considered reasonable to accomplish the task and must comply with the speakers' national regulations or norms.
- Written agreement between the supporting company and the Organisers is mandatory. It must state that the activity is educational and non-promotional and that the company will play no role in the design or conduct of the programme. The event cannot be endorsed by the ERS unless ERS Headquarters has received a copy of the agreement.
- The Organiser is accountable and, on request, must be able to report information concerning the expenditure of funds received from the supporting company.

Documentation

ERS requires the following documentation concerning commercially supported scientific activities:

- A letter of agreement with the industry sponsor specifying the conditions of acceptance of the educational grant (and the details of the support provided in case of restricted grants), a clear statement of the Organiser's responsibility for planning, content and execution of the educational activity, and a statement of independence from industry for educational materials and content.
- A disclosure of conflict of interest form, signed by the each speaker.
- Any letters and follow-up documents concerning a problem or complaint related to the industry commercial support of the accredited CME activity.

Individual sponsorship to attend scientific meetings

- A large number of people are able to attend ERS meetings as a result of commercial sponsorship. This is valuable to the recipient and the benefits from attending the meeting should outweigh the disadvantages. The extent to which some companies expect recipients to attend a company event must not interfere with the opportunity to mix with other scientists and clinicians. Industry booking procedures should not prevent delegates from attending the educational meetings that precede or follow the annual ERS meeting.
- ERS recognises the benefit that members gain from commercial sponsorship to attend national and international meetings.
- All hospitality offered to and accepted by members should conform to their national guidelines.
- Individuals must consider whether having financial support to attend a meeting could compromise their position in any way. A useful maxim for members is always to ask themselves whether they would be happy for their patients, employers or the local press to witness the hospitality being received.
- ERS Committee members and speakers must comply with the appropriate statement of disclosure.

ERS Sponsorship of Documents, Guidelines and Websites

- ERS is sometimes asked to be linked with or endorse documents or guidelines produced by commercial companies and/or other bodies. It is also now being asked to set up web links with patient information services including some that

are sponsored by a pharmaceutical company. In many instances, the documents or web sites cover areas of which the ERS is generally supportive.

- The ERS will only consider involvement in industry-sponsored documents, guidelines and other activities if it is fully involved from the beginning and if it is not linked to any specific commercial product or products.
- Links to patient information services on other web sites would only be agreed to if they were non-promotional and they would therefore need to be vetted. Members of the ERS could be asked to help with the vetting as long as rules were in place to enable this to be done consistently. The rules would need to consider longer-term surveillance of websites linked to the ERS.

Industry may disseminate ERS guidelines as educational material. Any commercial content must be clearly separated from educational material and must be submitted to ERS for approval before dissemination.