



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

November 2011

OPEN LETTER

To: Whom It May Concern

From: Douglas E. Henley, M.D.  
Executive Vice President/CEO

Re: Educational Grants for Approved CME Providers

It has come to the attention of the AAFP that many industry on-line grant application systems do not provide a mechanism to distinguish between the provider and the accreditor of a CME activity. This is problematic in the case of the AAFP which certifies many CME activities for AAFP constituent chapters and CME provider organizations seeking AAFP Prescribed credit.

The AAFP recommends that your company issue grants in a broader manner supported by the explanations of the three accrediting/certifying organizations described below. AAFP-approved CME activities assure that the AAFP's certification guidelines are met, and the approved CME provider organizations provide to you official written documentation from the AAFP to confirm that the activity has been reviewed and approved for AAFP CME credit.

An interpretation of accreditation/certification that considers only the ACCME system does a disservice to all parties involved. By expanding approval to qualified providers from all three accreditation/certification systems, you will:

- Ensure that deserving CME providers have the benefit of your support to produce legitimate educational activities for physicians,
- Allow many family physicians and osteopathic physicians access to important educational opportunities,
- Gain access to large professional communities of family and osteopathic physicians who do not participate in many of the CME activities offered by ACCME-accredited providers.

Importantly, all three national CME accreditation/certification agencies require all parties to adhere to the ACCME 2007 Standards for Commercial Support of Continuing Medical Education. The three national CME accrediting/certifying agencies, presented in order of their dates of origin, are:

- 1. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) has certified individual CME activities since 1948.** AAFP CME certification focuses on the learning experience of individual CME at the activity level rather than the process followed by institutions in designing these activities. AAFP CME certification review ensures the relevance of content to a family physician audience and validates its scientific integrity and soundness.

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**2. The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) has accredited CME providers and individual CME activities since 1973.**

The AOA Board of Trustees establishes the AOA's accreditation policies and procedures, which are monitored by the AOA Council on Continuing Medical Education (CCME). The AOA has its own system and standards for designating AOA CME credit hours.

**3. The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) has accredited CME providers since 1981.**

The ACCME accredits institutions for up to six years. Provider organizations that are accredited by the ACCME or by a state medical society recognized by the ACCME and that meet the standards of the Physician's Recognition Award of the American Medical Association (AMA) may designate CME activities for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit.<sup>TM</sup>

**Please note that while the AAFP is a recognized certifying organization, this does not imply that the AAFP endorses these activities or that the AAFP is working in cooperation with or in joint sponsorship with these providers. Therefore, it would be inappropriate and unreasonable for AAFP to accept educational grants issued by your companies on behalf of CME providers whose activities have been reviewed and approved for AAFP CME credit.**

The AAFP does monitor the organizations that submit CME applications to the AAFP to ensure they are accountable for maintaining compliance to AAFP CME credit eligibility criteria and to all major ethical and commercial support guidelines; such as the AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (CEJA) Ethical Opinion 8.061 on Gifts to Physicians from Industry and the 2007 ACCME Standards for Commercial Support (SCS), which the AAFP formally adopted as its own policies. CME provider organizations that apply for AAFP CME credit must attest that they will comply fully with these ethical guidelines. To ensure compliance, the AAFP conducts a random post-activity audit of about five percent of approved activities. The AAFP's process for content review and approval of CME activities comes under the purview of its physician member Commission on Continuing Professional Development (COCPD). Applications are reviewed by both the AAFP staff and volunteer physician reviewers who have been trained to assess the validity of content and its relevance to family physicians based on policies and procedures established by the COCPD.

The AAFP issues written notification to CME provider organizations when a specific activity has been reviewed and approved for AAFP CME credit. This written notification from the AAFP indicates that quality controls are in place to ensure that this activity will be a legitimate CME experience focused on the learning needs of the family physician to improve the health of patients, families, and communities.

Please let us know if you have any questions, or if we can be of additional assistance. You may contact Lori Foley, Director of Strategic Partnerships, at 800-274-2237 Ext. 4454 for more information. We look forward to your response.

Best wishes,



Douglas E. Henley, M.D.