

Conflict of Interest Guidelines –Faculty of Medicine

Faculty, learners, and staff of the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Memorial) have a duty to assess their own interests, involvement and activities and to report any real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest. All university members must abide by the [Memorial Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and its related procedures listed below:

- [Procedure for Disclosing and Assessing Conflicts of Interest](#)
- [Procedure for Handling Conflicts of Interest](#)
- [Procedure for Appeal of Conflict of Interest Decisions](#)

What is a conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest exists in any situation where there is a potential discrepancy between a member's personal interests and his or her obligations to the University such that an independent observer would reasonably question whether the member's behavior or decisions are in any way motivated by considerations of personal interest, financial or otherwise. A conflict of interest may be real, perceived or potential. Please see the [Memorial Conflict of Interest Policy](#) for a detailed list of conflict of interest situations.

How do I disclose a conflict of interest in the Faculty of Medicine?

The accurate and timely disclosure of a conflict of interest protects the integrity and reputation of individuals and institutions. Retroactive disclosures are not acceptable. Members of the FoM shall not participate in an activity or decision that involves a real, perceived, or potential conflict of interest unless such an activity or decision has been disclosed to, and approved by, the Memorial Conflict of Interest Committee as per [Procedure for Disclosing and Assessing Conflicts of Interest](#).

Procedure

1. All disclosures require the completion of the [Conflict of Interest Disclosure form](#).
 - Part 2 of the form is to be left blank for completion by the **Dean of Medicine**.
2. Completed disclosure forms shall be sent to the [Policy Analyst](#) who will forward the disclosure to the Dean's office for their review.
3. Once reviewed by the Dean's Office and signed by the Dean of Medicine, the Policy Analyst will send the completed disclosure form to the Memorial Conflict of Interest Committee for their review.
4. The Memorial Conflict of Interest Committee will send a written response to the individual who made the disclosure and the Dean of Medicine regarding the proposed mitigating measures.

Interactions with Industry – Guidelines for the Faculty of Medicine

Historically, health care delivery, and subsequently, health research and education, have involved interactions with industry. The following guidelines are in addition to the Memorial Conflict of Interest Policy and aim to provide information regarding specific interactions with industry that are unique to a healthcare context and have the potential to adversely affect an individual's capacity to meet their academic responsibilities if not managed properly.

Scope

The information contained in this document applies to faculty, learners, and staff of the FoM while engaging in activities related to their position with Memorial, whether in Memorial facilities or off-campus.

What do you mean by industry?

In this guideline, the term **industry** refers to the full range of commercial enterprises associated with health care including but not limited to, the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device industry as well as commercial providers of services related to clinical practice, research and education.

Interactions with Industry

Relationships between physicians and industry should be guided by the [Canadian Medical Association \(CMA\) Code of Ethics and Professionalism \(2018\)](#) and the [CMA Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry](#).

Below, several types of **interactions with industry that require assessment and/or disclosure** are described. This is not an exhaustive list; the absence of any specific industry relationship does not imply endorsement. Members of the FoM should avoid any influence that could undermine their professional integrity.

Gifts: As indicated in the [CMA Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry](#), members of the FoM should not accept personal gifts of any significant monetary or other value from industry. Gifts refer to items of any value for which the recipient neither pays nor provides services. FoM members should not accept payment from industry for simply attending an activity or conference. The acceptance of gifts, even those small in nature, have been shown to have the potential to influence decision-making.

- **Professional Travel:** Funding from industry for travel is acceptable only for legitimate reimbursement or for contractual services. FoM members should not accept travel funds from industry for simply attending a conference.
- **Food:** With the exception of modest meals and refreshments provided in connection with accepted programming as outlined in this document, industry supplied food and meals are considered a personal gift and should not be accepted.

Industry funding for Educational Activities: Proposed industry support for undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate medical education activities, scholarships, or fellowships should first be reviewed by the FoM Development Office. If deemed appropriate, such support can be given centrally to the FoM Development Office in the form of an unrestricted educational grant. Funds for educational activities may be provided to the FoM or to an individual department or division, but must not be given to an individual faculty member, staff, or learner. It is to be understood that the allocation of funds will be done at the sole discretion of the FoM and there is no quid pro quo (a favour for a favour) expectation or commitment.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)/Continuing Medical Education (CME):

The development, delivery, accreditation, and financial support of all FoM CME/CPD programming must be coordinated through the Office of Professional and Educational Development in accordance with outlined standards and procedures as indicated in the [Policy on Management of Accredited CME/CPD Activities and External Financial Support](#). Industry funding of journal clubs must follow the general guidelines of accredited CPD/CME events as outlined in the [Procedure on Management of Accredited CME/CPD Activities and External Financial Support](#).

Members of the FoM may become involved with industry when they participate in unaccredited CME/CPD. Interests of industry may not always be congruent with addressing the educational needs of the profession. Members of the FoM should be discouraged from speaking at industry-sponsored non-accredited events when they do not have editorial control of content. If members of the FoM do participate in such events, their participation should be disclosed and guided by provisions outlined in Article 21.04 of the [MUNFA agreement](#) which states the following:

“The name of the University shall not be used in any outside professional activity unless agreed, in writing, by the Provost & Vice-President (Academic), although nothing shall prevent the Academic Staff Member (ASM) from stating the nature and place of their employment, rank and title, in connection with outside professional activities, provided that they shall not purport to represent the University or speak for it, or to have its approval unless that approval has been given in writing.”

Industry funded/sponsored research: Participation in industry sponsored research activities must always be preceded by formal approval of the project by the [Health Research Ethics Authority](#). The research must be conducted according to the appropriate current standards and procedures. FoM members shall not enter into research agreements with industry that indefinitely restrict the member’s right to publish or disclose results of the study or report adverse events that occur during the course of the study. Members of the FoM have an obligation to take all steps necessary to ensure research activities are ethically defensible, socially responsible and scientifically valid.

Sales Representatives from Industry: No member of the FoM is required to see industry representatives. Industry representatives are only welcome to the FoM by appointment or invitation only. Meetings with industry representatives should only occur in an area with no direct patient contact. Learner involvement in meetings with industry must occur under the supervision of a faculty member for educational purposes only.

The faculty member has a responsibility to ensure that discussions with learners about products are medically and scientifically sound and include discussion of appropriate alternatives, if available. Members are also reminded that they have a responsibility to abide by established policies and procedures of the affiliated health care centres they work in with regard to meetings with industry representatives.

Ghostwriting: All FoM faculty, staff, and learners are responsible for the content of any publication, presentation or slides presented in their name. Under no circumstances will any of the FoM members be listed as co-authors on any content, oral or written, that was ghostwritten by any party.

Participation in Consulting: This section is directly aligned with the [CMA Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry](#).

Consulting relationships include contractual relationships, advisory boards and any relationship whereby a faculty member receives, or has the expectation to receive, income or other benefit for services other than for clinical or university work. This includes, but is not limited to, honoraria, commissioned papers, and lectures for which money is received.¹

The following points should be considered before a physician enters into such an agreement.

- The exact deliverables of the arrangement should be clearly set out and put in writing in the form of a contractual agreement. The purpose of the arrangement should be exclusively for the physician to impart specialized medical knowledge and should not include any promotional or educational activities on the part of the company itself.
- Remuneration of the physician should be reasonable and take into account the extent and complexity of the physician's involvement.
- Whenever possible, meetings should be held in the geographic locale of the physician or as part of a meeting which he/she would normally attend. When these arrangements are not feasible, basic travel and accommodation expenses may be reimbursed to the physician. Meetings should not be held outside of Canada, with the exception of international boards.

¹ University of Toronto - Relationships with Industry and the Educational Environment in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medical Education.