

# inside *medical education*

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APRIL 2007

## SCS: CHANGES IN THE WIND?

Indicia supports ACCME's consideration of a firewall policy that is based on evidence, reflects "best practices" in ensuring independence, and applies equally to all stakeholders.

Recent proposed changes to the ACCME's Standards for Commercial Support position statements have generated considerable discussion in the CME industry. The proposed changes would 1) change the requirements for written agreements for commercial support, and 2) expand the definition of a

- What are the problems that need to be solved?
- What data document the need for the proposed changes?
- What is the number and origin of the comments from providers that prompted the proposals and the form in which they were presented to the ACCME Board?
- How will the proposed changes address the problems?
- What are the potential costs and benefits of the new positions?
- What justification exists to allow some types of providers to be exempt from compliance with select policies?

supporters.... [W]e are concerned that prohibitions about what can be included in agreements will make the agreements themselves less meaningful to both parties....

[Indicia]... recommend[s] that the ACCME adopt a clear and complete definition of "significant educational decisions" that must be made independently of a commercial interest.... Definitive language would frame interactions between supporters and providers... and provide more direction to providers and joint sponsors....

### Issue #2: Expanded Definition of a Commercial Interest

Indicia does not support the proposed change to the definition of a commercial interest. The proposed language does not take into consideration the significant time and costs that we have already undertaken to ensure the Independence of CME.

commercial interest. In February, ACCME released a call for comment on this important issue, and Indicia responded. The following text is excerpted from Indicia President Karen Overstreet's response to the request.

### Issue #1: Written Agreements for Commercial Support

[Indicia does] not support [this proposed change] because these documents are only part of the interaction between providers and

### General Feedback on the Proposed Positions

Indicia requested that ACCME provide a more complete explanation of the rationale for proposing the 2 new positions and address the following questions:

Indicia commends ACCME on its work to self-regulate and to enhance the quality of CME. By identifying and documenting specific problems and the rationale for proposed solutions that apply equally to all providers and joint sponsors, then allowing appropriate input from all stakeholders, ACCME will ensure continuous improvement within the CME community.

The North American Association of Medical Education and Communication Companies (NAAMECC) has also issued its own statement on the proposed changes. To read more, go to [naamecc.org](http://naamecc.org).

## ETHICAL HYPOTHETICAL

Indicia President Karen Overstreet offers guidance on difficult ethical issues that often arise in maintaining compliance and independence in CME in a new column, "Ethical Hypothetical," written with CME veteran Jacqueline Parochka, EdD, FACME. The column is available in *Medical*

*Meetings* magazine as well as online at [meetingsnet.com/medicalmeetings/](http://meetingsnet.com/medicalmeetings/). Readers are invited to submit questions on their own CME-related ethical dilemmas—hypothetical or otherwise—to the site's editor at [thosansky@meetings.net](mailto:thosansky@meetings.net).



**I3D UPDATE: AWARD-WINNING COLLABORATION**

Indicia has been selected as the first-ever recipient of a Best Practices Award in the

category of "Outstanding Collaboration Among Stakeholders in Continuing Medical Education" from the North American Association of Medical Education and Communication Companies (NAAMECC). The award was presented in January at the Alliance for CME conference in Phoenix, AZ.

Indicia was recognized for its participation in the Initiative for Decreasing Disparities in Depression (I3D), a program focused on reducing disparities in the care of racial and ethnic minority patients with depression. A collaborative effort of Indicia, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and University of Alabama School of Medicine, funded by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, the initiative was a model of collaboration on multiple levels, the most noteworthy being its novel, independent grants program, which last year awarded \$100,000 each to 4 independent

organizations with complementary missions in reducing disparities. Dr. Overstreet said receiving the award was especially pleasing and timely, given the greater emphasis CME regulators are placing on partnering. "This award acknowledges the significance of our multifaceted initiative to improve depression care for minorities—a complex issue with myriad opportunities for organizations to collaborate to improve physician performance and, ultimately, patient outcomes."

**EVENTS OF INTEREST**

ACCME: "Understanding ACCME Accreditation" Workshop  
April 29–May 1  
InterContinental-Chicago  
Chicago, IL  
<http://www.accme.org>

<sup>1</sup>CBI's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum on Continuing Medical Education  
June 18–19  
Park Hyatt-Philadelphia  
Philadelphia, PA  
<https://www.cbinet.com>

\*Center for Business Intelligence (CBI)  
West Coast Conference on Bio/Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Grants  
May 17–18  
Hotel Whitcomb  
San Francisco, CA  
<https://www.cbinet.com>

\*On day 2 of this conference, Dr. Overstreet will present an interactive session titled "Enhance the Effectiveness of Requests for Information and Requests for Proposals." She will also serve as moderator of a panel discussion titled "Determine Long-Term Grant Funding Goals for Large, Mid-Sized, and Small Companies."

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Overstreet will be serving as a panelist for an ACCME Guideline Panel Discussion titled "Managing Change—New ACCME Guidelines and Their Impact on the Industry" on day 1 of this conference.

A limited number of discount tickets are available for the CBI meetings listed above. For information, contact [karen.overstreet@indiciaed.com](mailto:karen.overstreet@indiciaed.com).

GAME (Global Alliance for Medical Education) 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
*Harmonization of CME Systems Around the World*  
June 10–12  
Westin New York at Times Square  
New York, NY  
<http://www.game-cme.org>

**INDICIA INFORMS**

This year's Pharmaceutical Meeting Planners Forum (held March 26 in Philadelphia) offered multiple opportunities for education and information on industry issues. Indicia's own Educational Program Manager, Tricia Wilson, MS, led a workshop on the environmental shifts affecting the CME enterprise today. Focusing on the many changes in CME regulations and the legal environment to date, Tricia contrasted the "then-and-now" industry environments and offered a sobering view of the financial and legal consequences to stakeholders who fail to maintain—and to document steps taken to

ensure—independence in CME activities. Most importantly, she advised that faculty selection and interaction, as well as content development and validation, must be carefully managed to prevent any appearance of commercial bias. By adopting policies that include adherence to OIG Guidance, PhRMA Code, AdvaMed Code, and ACCME recommendations, stakeholders can successfully mitigate risk, but she advised that proactive policies and documentation are paramount in maintaining compliance with the ACCME's Standards for Commercial Support.

**Questions or Comments?**

Please send information, comments, or questions for future issues of *Inside Medical Education* to Karen Overstreet at [karen.overstreet@indiciaed.com](mailto:karen.overstreet@indiciaed.com).

**Please visit our Web site at [www.indiciaed.com](http://www.indiciaed.com) to learn more about these and other important CME topics.**

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