

Innovative Medicines Canada's Updated Code of Ethical Practices Sets the Bar Higher

By Lama Abi Khaled, Executive Director, Ethics, Legal and Regulatory at Innovative Medicines Canada

Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC), the national voice of Canada's innovative pharmaceutical industry, and its members have set a high standard for ethical, transparent and open practices that respect the relationships between members, the life sciences sector, healthcare professionals (HCPs) and the Canadian public. All members of IMC are bound by the association's Code of Ethical Practices (Code), which maintains strict standards on what is acceptable in their work with HCPs and other industry stakeholders. Compliance with the Code is a condition of membership in IMC.

IMC has recently made significant updates to its Code to ensure that the important working relationship between the industry and its stakeholders continues to reflect the highest ethical standards. The changes to the Code seek to clarify the language of certain sections and to address areas of perceived or actual conflict of interest or undue influence.

The updated Code introduces changes to Patient Support Programs (PSPs) and Medical Practice Activities (MPAs). PSPs are programs aimed at increasing or facilitating patients' understanding of a disease and/or treatment, bettering patient outcomes or improving adherence to treatments. PSPs encompass a broad scope of activities, ranging from patient support calls to the administration of drug products. MPAs are programs offered to a medical practice to contribute to the practice's goal of bettering health outcomes via a comprehensive/holistic approach to medicine.

The Code changes are intended to prohibit direct and indirect payments or other benefits to a patient's prescribing HCP or a person who is not at arm's length from the patient's prescribing HCP. Additionally, the changes prohibit

third-party service providers, engaged by IMC members to deliver the PSP/MPA, from providing payments or other benefits to a patient's prescribing HCP or a person who is not at arm's length from the patient's prescribing HCP. Furthermore, the changes clarify the prohibition of payments or other benefits to an HCP for services reimbursable by the healthcare system.

In addition to the changes related to PSPs and MPAs, the updated Code addresses the appropriateness of locations and venues when IMC members sponsor third-party conferences and congresses. The changes provide that members should be guided by the same criteria for sponsoring those conferences and congresses as those that apply when they are organizing their own business meetings. For instance, locations should not be the main attraction of the event and cannot reasonably be perceived as such, and venues must not be lavish, extravagant or perceived as luxurious and must not be known for their entertainment, sports, leisure or vacation facilities. When deciding whether to sponsor a third-party conference or congress, IMC members should consider the proposed location and venue as well as review detailed agendas to evaluate the conference's medical or scientific value.

The updated Code is available on IMC's website and came into effect on January 1, 2020. However, the changes related to PSPs and MPAs will come into effect on July 1, 2020, while those related to sponsoring third-party conferences and congresses will come into effect on January 1, 2021. If you have any questions about the Code, please contact Lama Abi Khaled, IMC's Executive Director, Ethics, Legal and Regulatory.

About Innovative Medicines Canada

Innovative Medicines Canada advocates for policies that enable the discovery, development and commercialization of innovative medicines and vaccines that improve the lives of all Canadians. We support our members' commitment to being valued partners in the Canadian healthcare system. For more information, visit innovativemedicines.ca.

