

## Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors

### **Policy on External Support for Educational Programs, Webinar Endorsement, and Publications**

The following policy discusses how the CAGC seeks to ensure the integrity and objectivity of educational programs and publications that are supported in part or in full by outside entities. This policy was approved by the Board of Directors of on April 12, 2017

#### **Background**

The mission of the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors (CAGC) is to promote high standards of practice, encourage professional growth and increase public awareness of the genetic counselling profession in Canada.

Continuing education opportunities and the discussion of issues relevant to human genetics and the genetic counselling profession are an integral part of membership in CAGC. The integrity of CAGC, and the activities it undertakes, depends on the avoidance of conflicts of interest, or even the appearance of such conflicts, by the individuals involved in those activities. The scientific integrity of CAGC's educational programs is dependent upon appropriate management of potential conflicts of interest. As an entity that approves and provides continuing education for genetic counsellors, the CAGC strives for balance, independence, and objectivity in all of its educational activities through appropriate disclosure of actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest.

CAGC's Speaker Contract and Conflict of Interest Policy is in place not only to ensure disclosure of financial and other interests, but also to make specific judgments regarding situations in which financial relationships are inconsistent with responsible clinical research practices. CAGC's Conflict of Interest Policy does not automatically presume impropriety on the basis of financial interests or other relationships of a commercial nature. Instead, it takes into account the many factors that can influence judgments about clinical research data, and seeks to make that information available to those reviewing the data prior to presentation or publication.

The CAGC conducts a number of activities connected to clinical research, both directly and indirectly, including the development of scientific and educational programs at the CAGC Annual Education Conference and other educational offerings, such as webinar development. The CAGC requires the participants in these activities, as well as all Committee and Board activities, to disclose any financial interests or other relationships with an entity having an interest in the subject matter in question.

#### **CAGC Policy on Independence from Funding Sources**

CAGC conducts professional continuing education programs, advocates for access to genetic and genomic services, and supports rigorous clinical and translational research. These programs are supported in part by funding from non-profit organizations and corporations. To ensure that CAGC's

programs are developed and conducted independent of sponsor influences, the CAGC has established the following policies and procedures:

### **Separation of program development from commercial support**

The CAGC is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote high standards of practice, encourage professional growth and increase public awareness of the genetic counselling profession in Canada. The CAGC operates from a Board-reviewed plan of work with annual strategic planning. CAGC programs function with the elected Board of Directors and with volunteer Committees comprised of CAGC members. As a provider and approver of continuing education credits (CECs), the CAGC maintains control over its program planning and content. Separating program planning from commercial support solicitation helps to minimize any opportunity for companies to influence program development or content, while also allowing for the opportunity of multiple perspectives per topic. Sponsors may not have input into the following:

- Identification of continuing education needs
- Determination of CAGC educational objectives
- Selection of educational content
- Selection of persons and organizations that will be in a position to control the content of the continuing education
- Selection of persons and organizations that will be in a position to approve the content of the continuing education
- Selection of educational methods
- Evaluation of the supported activity

Any volunteer leader having a relationship with a CAGC sponsor must disclose this information on a Conflict of Interest disclosure form; however, this should not automatically exclude the member from participating in CAGC educational projects.

The CAGC accepts financial support for continuing education programs in compliance with applicable industry standards. Additionally, presenters/speakers at any CAGC sponsored program must sign a CAGC conflict of interest disclosure form and publicly disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, at the time of the presentation.

*Any conflict of interest will be managed according to CAGC's overall COI policies (please refer to the CAGC Conflict of Interest Policy and the CAGC Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form).*

### **Webinar Endorsement/Project-based Webinar partnership Rules and Regulations**

Continuing education opportunities for CAGC members through webinar events have become increasingly available. As such, the CAGC's Webinar Endorsement/Project-based Webinar partnership Rules and Regulations are designed to maintain the educational and scientific focus of webinars made available to the CAGC Membership.

To ensure the integrity and objectivity of the educational content presented to the CAGC Membership, the CAGC has developed an application process for sponsors requesting webinar endorsement. The CAGC will review the program/presentation content. Once CAGC has deemed the material consistent with the CAGC mission and standards, an official endorsement of the webinar will be sent to CAGC Membership.

CAGC has also developed a process for partnership with a sponsor, known as a Project-based Webinar partnership. In this type of partnership, the sponsor is requesting CAGC insight and active participation in the development of webinar material. Thereby the sponsor is also obtaining CAGC oversight in the planning, content review and approval, as well as an official endorsement of the webinar. CAGC maintains that the sponsor will not have input in to the areas outlined above (see bulleted-list).

For additional information, see CAGC's "Education Partnership Proposal Application Form".

### **Exhibitor/Sponsor Rules and Regulations**

CAGC's Exhibitor/Sponsor Rules and Regulations are designed to maintain the educational and scientific focus of CAGC meetings. These Rules and Regulations establish standards for certain business transactions, including rental of exhibit space and permission to offer sponsored educational sessions or ancillary events. Ancillary events held adjunct to CAGC meetings include functions such as, but not limited to educational events, meetings, and social functions. Ancillary events that are educational in nature are to be related to the field of genetic counselling, genetics, and genomics. Opportunities exist for sponsorship of non-education related components involved in planning a CAGC conference. Exhibitor/sponsor rules relating to such opportunities are maintained by the CAGC Annual Education Conference Planning Committee.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

CAGC has a comprehensive conflict of interest policy in place to identify, prevent, and manage conflicts of interest in its programs.

For additional information, see CAGC's Policy on Conflict of Interest.