

CONFLICT of INTEREST in EDUCATION PROJECT PHASE I: CASE SCENARIOS

Sponsored by the GEA's CME Section Task Force on COI¹

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Purpose: To address individual and institutional conflicts of interest across the continuum in medical education.

Background: Potential conflicts of interest are an integral part of life for faculty in the academic medical center. Financial and intellectual contributions from industry support scientific research, capital building projects, and education across the continuum and in all disciplines. Direct educational grants support many continuing education activities, including meetings, scientific journals, and other media. Perhaps less widely recognized is the significant financial support for trainees, faculty, and programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Recognizing, acknowledging, and managing conflict of interest in medical education is critical to maintaining the trust of the public in the medical profession. The AAMC's widely disseminated publications on conflict of interest in research have led to changes in policies and procedures at many medical schools.

Methods: The CME steering committee of the GEA identified two working groups with representation from the continuum of medical education (UME, GME, CME) and from each GEA region. One task force, chaired by Nancy Bennett included addressed institutional issues. The other task force chaired by David Steward addressed individual faculty issues. Both task forces reviewed the literature, identified key issues, and developed case scenarios. The scenarios were presented at each of the four GEA regional meeting in spring 2004, facilitated by a member of the CME-COI Task Force.

Results: The scenarios triggered lively and thoughtful discussions requiring participants to evaluate the congruence between their values (what they say) and their actions (what they do) as medical educators. A brief report on the COI project at the GEA's June 2004 Steering Committee as part of the CME's contribution to the *Agenda for Action* initiatives. The steering committee encouraged the CME to sustain this discussion on COI by providing other educators with the opportunity engage their colleagues and learners in discussions about COI through access to the case scenarios and associated trigger questions.

Discussion and Actions: The CME-COI Task Force agreed to make available the COI case scenarios and the associated trigger questions as an enduring product for use by GEA members. These evidence-based scenarios, which encompass aspects of almost all the ACGME competencies including professionalism, practice-based learning and improvement, communication, and systems-based practice, are applicable to all levels of medical education and can be used as face-to-face or e-based discussion triggers, case examples in presentations, or as the basis for standardized assessment tools. A list of recommended readings/references is provided to enhance the instructor's use.

Recommended Readings/Selected References:

1. Coulehan, Jack and Williams, Peter C. *Conflicting Professional Values in Medical Education*. Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics 2003.
2. Barry, Daniel; Cyran, Elizabeth; Anderson, Robert J. *Common Issues in Medical Professionalism: Room to Grow*. American Journal of Medicine. Volume 108 Feb 2000.
3. Fine, Michael. *Sacred Space or Marketplace: the Kern Case and the Meaning of Medicine as a Profession*. Medicine & Health/Rhode Island. Volume 86 No2 February 2003.

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CASE SCENARIO 1

You have negotiated participation in an interesting medical “start-up” company involving the development of sophisticated teaching mannequins. However, you find that this is time consuming, and ask your chair for relief from one afternoon per week of clinical duties, and/or teaching. You anticipate his full support of this type of venture, from which you feel your department will directly benefit.

- A) Does the scenario present a problem? If so, is there a conflict of interest?
- B) Who would be involved in addressing the problem (faculty member, the department chair, or academic dean)?
- C) Do you see other related problems in your setting?

CASE SCENARIO 2

A medical school’s clinical practice adopts a medical dictation system, which students cannot access. The faculty practice pays for the dictations by the word. The only other option for students to be able to enter notes in the chart is to complete a “progress note template”, which is a series of bulleted checklist items for the history and physical, but no true written note. Students and faculty notice that students are not learning to how to write an effective chart note.

- A) Does the scenario present a problem? If so, is there a conflict of interest?
- B) Who would be involved in addressing the problem (faculty member, the department chair, or academic dean)?
- C) Do you see other related problems in your setting?

CASE SCENARIO 3

You have been involved in developing a “patient safety” curriculum for your professional society, and you think it would be a great addition to your student curriculum. The course director in your department says this issue is important, but the curriculum is too crowded already and won’t allow you to present this to the students. You have a session with the students about another topic which needs to be revised this year, so you consider doing at least part of the session about patient safety.

- A) Does the scenario present a problem? If so, is there a conflict of interest?
- B) Who would be involved in addressing the problem (faculty member, the department chair, or academic dean)?
- C) Do you see other related problems in your setting?

CASE SCENARIO 4

A faculty member who sponsors a clinical elective in rheumatology for senior medical students is paid an honorarium to give a talk on new drug therapy in Rheumatoid Arthritis at a pharmaceutical company-sponsored event at a local restaurant, to which residents and students are invited. Residents who want to attend the lecture ask to leave an official program activity early to attend the dinner, at the suggestion of the faculty member who is giving the talk. A pharmaceutical company offers to give a Primer in Rheumatology labeled with his and the company's name to each attendee.

- A) Does the scenario present a problem? If so, is there a conflict of interest?
- B) Who would be involved in addressing the problem (faculty member, the department chair, or academic dean)?
- C) Do you see other related problems in your setting?