

Pharma Marketing News

Reprint

Is It Time to End Industry Sponsored CME? *Survey Results*

PMN Reprint 71-04

This is a reprint of an article that appeared in the January 2008 issue of *Pharma Marketing News*.

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<http://www.news.pharma-mkting.com/PMN-past-issues.html>

Published by:
VirSci Corporation
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Newtown, PA 18940
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Survey Results

Is It Time to End Industry Sponsored CME?

Preliminary Results from an Ongoing Survey

By John Mack

Since 17 December 2007, *Pharma Marketing News* has hosted an online survey ([access it here](#)) asking respondents their views regarding industry sponsorship of accredited CME, including views on value, bias, ACCME firewalls, and alternative means of CME support. We present some preliminary results here based on 59 responses.

About Respondents

Figure 1 shows the affiliation of respondents. Grouped in "Agency/Pub" are ad agencies, marketing/PR agencies, and publishing/media companies; "Other" includes medical schools, professional societies, and patients.

Approximately 25% of respondents reported that their organization is accredited by ACCME, whereas about two-thirds were not. The remaining 9% were unsure. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents were based in the U.S.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents indicated they were very or somewhat supportive of the pharmaceutical industry (42% were very supportive). Only 12% were very or somewhat unsupportive of the industry (5% were very unsupportive).

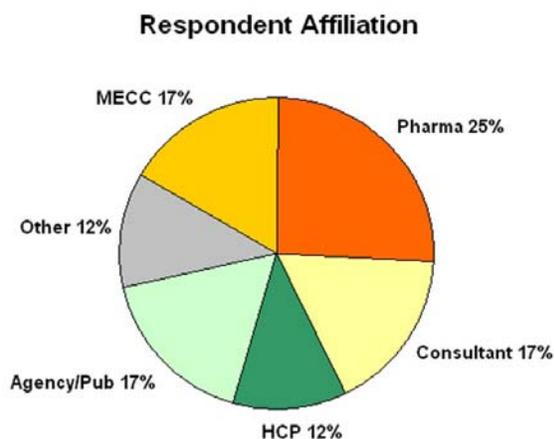


Figure 1: Respondent Affiliation

Views on Industry-Sponsored CME

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

1. Referring to single-company sponsored CME, I believe it is strongly biased in favor of the sponsor's product(s). [BIAS]
2. ACCME guidelines regarding "firewalls" between the commercial and educational interests of a CME provider are effective in preventing bias in pharma-sponsored CME. [FIREWALL]
3. Pharma-sponsored CME should be eliminated or greatly reduced and other means found for paying to develop CME (eg, direct payment by physicians, government grants, private foundation grants, etc.) [NO INDUSTRY]
4. Industry sponsorship of CME is vital to the improvement of medical outcomes. [VITAL]
5. The best way for pharmaceutical companies to sponsor CME is through block grants made to medical schools and/or professional societies. [GRANTS]

Figure 2 (pg. 19) summarizes the results.

Views of Segments

Accredited Organizations: Of the 25% of respondents from ACCME-accredited organizations, 73% disagreed that single-company sponsorship of accredited CME was biased (compared to 40% overall). The same percentage disagreed that pharma-sponsored CME should be eliminated (versus 40% overall). Eighty percent (80%) agreed that industry sponsorship of CME is vital (versus 61% overall).

Some comments from respondents in this segment:

"For many professional medical societies, the major source of revenue to allow the implementation of CME programs comes from the pharma industry. To cut off this funding resource would result in many fewer CME activities and perhaps the extinction of many smaller professional societies who truly impact physician and researcher knowledge in a very positive way." – Anonymous

Continues...

“Universities and medical societies can be very academic and ivory tower plus are rife with politics. But they often have KOLs and expertise. Private providers are innovative and cost conscious. A combination of the two can be the best deliver vehicle while pharma can provide the firewalled funding.” -- David Hoo, VP Marketing, Advanstar

“It is the obligation of the CME provider to establish the educational need prior to pursuing grant support from industry. Upon grant receipt, the pharmaceutical company has no input as to the content or faculty selection. It is the obligation of the CME provider/MECC to ensure that the content is fair-balanced and current.” -- Anonymous

Phamacos: Of the 25% of respondents from pharmaceutical/biotech/medical device companies, 43% disagreed that single-company sponsorship of accredited CME was biased (compared to 40% overall). A somewhat higher percentage (50%) disagreed that pharma-sponsored CME should be eliminated (versus 40% overall). Eighty-six percent (86%) agreed that industry sponsorship of CME is vital (versus 61 %) overall.

Some comments from respondents in this segment:

“I think it is important that pharma sponsor programs, but it should be totally independent from the company e.g. a third party should make the determination from pharma where the funding will go, not a department in pharma.” -- Anonymous

“Pharma has money. Pharma has interest in interacting with physicians. Sponsoring CME is one way for pharma to spend money as a way of interacting with physicians. It is up to the regulators to create frameworks to ensure the CME modules offered stay product and company neutral (as far as possible).” -- Anonymous

“It can be done right but most companies aren’t doing it right.” -- Anonymous

“The credibility of the accrediting agencies are at risk. Typically even CME programs will show benefits to the sponsor’s products, but the vetting done by the accrediting group should man that the material presented is unbiased. My personal experience is that these programs do provide unbiased education and create forums for genuine scientific discussion.” -- Anonymous

“I think that pharma companies can effectively support CME without biasing the content. Within my organization, the entire process is completely divorced from Marketing and is managed solely by Medical. Grant requests must come from outside organizations; if they meet general guidelines with regards to the objectives that we have, they are approved. Once a grant is made, my company allows the content to be developed independently. Moreover, we have no approval sayso whatsoever.” -- Anonymous

If you have taken the survey, thanks very much. If not, you can [take the survey here](#). To review the de-identified results to date, click [here](#).

Opinions

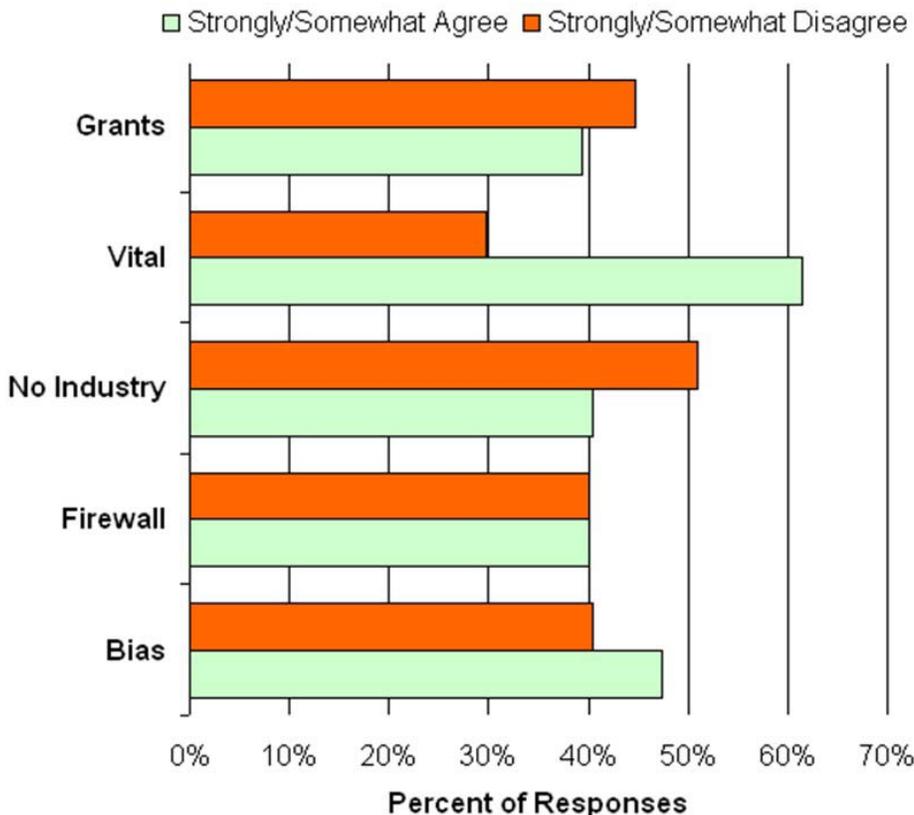


Figure 2: Respondents’ Opinions.

Pharma Marketing News

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