



# Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education

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[www.accme.org](http://www.accme.org)

February 5, 2016

Dear Accredited CME Provider:

Our learners expect us to ensure that the education that is presented to them is independent and based on valid content. ACCME providers use the ACCME's [Standards for Commercial Support: Standards to Ensure Independence in CME Activities<sup>SM</sup>](#) (the Standards) as a mechanism to help minimize bias and provide transparency in accredited CME. Even if you don't accept commercial support for your activities, you still need to use the Standards to identify and resolve conflicts of interest for speakers and planners.

Over the last few years, compliance rates with the Standards have improved; however, noncompliance with the Standards remains a common cause of noncompliance findings for accredited CME providers — and I'm confident that we can do better.

I know that managing independence requires careful attention and oversight — and we at ACCME want to support you in achieving and sustaining compliance. With the new year upon us, I want to share several strategies and reminders to help ensure your compliance with the Standards:

1. When obtaining information about the relevant financial relationships of those in control of content in your CME program, ensure that you:
  - a. **Maintain a list** and collect information from all those who plan, review, author, edit, teach, or evaluate each of your CME activities.
  - b. Use the **correct definition** of a [commercial interest](#) to identify relevant relationships.
  - c. Collect information about all [relationships](#) that are **relevant to the content** from the **prior 12 months**, including those of the **partner or spouse**; there is no minimum financial amount that makes a relationship relevant.
  - d. Confirm that anyone in control of content is not an **employee** of a commercial interest; an employee may only participate in restricted roles as outlined on our [website](#).
2. Obtain information about relevant financial relationships sufficiently in advance of an activity so you have time to engage with the person and [resolve any conflicts](#) **before** the activity. Disclosure to learners, by itself, or actions taken only after the activity, are not acceptable mechanisms.
3. **Keep records** to show that you consistently identified, resolved, and disclosed relevant financial relationships for each person who reported a relevant financial relationship.

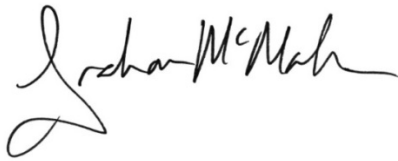
4. If a course director or planner has a conflict of interest, consider having them recuse themselves from participating in planning the part of the activity related to the conflict, and identify a **non-conflicted co-director** who will assume that responsibility.
5. If commercial support is provided, ensure that the [written agreements](#) are signed by **both** the provider and the commercial supporter **before** the activity.

I hope that you will review this information in the context of your CME program's compliance with the Standards. There's a lot more information about the Standards on our [website](#), including many [examples](#) of compliance and noncompliance with each one. If you're ever unsure, just email us at [info@accme.org](mailto:info@accme.org): we're here to help.

You can also use that email to let me or us know if you have suggestions for additional resources or successful strategies you'd like to share with your colleagues.

Best wishes for a successful 2016 and thank you for the work you are doing every day to make a difference and improve the health of our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Graham McMahon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Graham McMahon, MD, MMSc  
President and Chief Executive Officer