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Pfizer Changes Its Funding of Continuing Medical Education in the U.S.

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Support to Focus on Academic Medical Centers, Hospitals, Associations and Medical Societies Move Eliminates Direct Support for Commercial CME Providers

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Pfizer today announced changes in the way it supports continuing medical education (CME) initiatives for U.S. healthcare professionals.

Pfizer will continue to support CME programs at many of the world's leading academic medical centers and teaching hospitals, as well as programs sponsored by associations, medical societies and community hospitals, in keeping with the shared goal of improving public health.

Effective immediately, Pfizer is eliminating all direct funding for physician continuing medical education (CME) programs provided by medical education and communication companies (MECCs). The company will honor existing commitments.

"This move by Pfizer, to my knowledge the first among commercial supporters of CME, represents a significant advance in the profession's ability to address the complex issue of conflict of interest," said Dave Davis, MD, Vice President, Continuing Education and Improvement, Association of American Medical Colleges.

"Continuing medical education, when done right, improves healthcare provider understanding of disease, expands evidence-based treatment, and contributes to patient safety," said Dr. Joseph M. Feczko, Chief Medical Officer of Pfizer Inc. "We understand that even the appearance of conflicts in CME is damaging and we are determined to take actions that are in the best interests of patients and physicians."

Medical licensing rules administered by most states in the U.S. require physicians to receive a certain number of continuing medical education credits each year, generally between 15 and 50 depending on the state.

Since 1981, the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) has accredited institutions and organizations offering continuing medical education. Pfizer and other pharmaceutical companies have helped fund these programs because they provide important new clinical information to physicians and other healthcare professionals with the goal of supporting quality patient care and improved healthcare outcomes.

Pfizer's new approach reflects its goal of meeting the highest standards for medical education, and academic medical centers, hospitals, associations and medical societies best meet these standards. For example, Pfizer will continue to support grants such as one made to the California Academy of Family Physicians in March for a three-year national healthcare professional education campaign to reduce the number of U.S. smokers. This grant was distributed among nine partner organizations, including the University of Wisconsin, a leading institution in the improvement of continuing medical education.

"The purpose of continuing medical education is to help physicians and other healthcare professionals enhance clinical care and improve patient outcomes," said Dr. George Mejicano, Associate Dean for Continuing Professional Development, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. "Today's announcement sends a strong signal that educational funds must be used appropriately and that industry support is intended to fund education to improve health."

To qualify for Pfizer support in the future, CME programs will have to meet revised, stricter criteria. These criteria will:

- Eliminate all new direct funding commitments for CME programs by medical education and communication companies (MECCs);
- Initiate a competitive grant review period for grant applicants to encourage more innovative, high-quality grant applications;
- Support the medical community's call for balanced funding in CME by establishing financial caps on grant support; and
- Require all major grant applicants to meet criteria equivalent to ACCME's highest level of accreditation[1] .
- In addition, Pfizer will continue to publicly report all CME grants provided in the U.S. at www.pfizer.com.

"Pfizer's new criteria for providing educational grants to CME providers is yet another indicator that the entire healthcare community is committed to assuring the highest quality of independent CME," according to Joseph S. Green, PhD, Senior Vice President, Professional Development and Education at the American College of Cardiology.

Pfizer: Working Together for a Healthier World

Founded in 1849, Pfizer is the world's largest research-based pharmaceutical company taking new approaches to better health. We discover, develop, manufacture and deliver quality, safe and effective prescription medicines to treat and help prevent disease for both people and animals. We also partner with healthcare providers, governments and local communities around the world to expand access to our medicines and to provide better quality health care and health system support. At Pfizer, 85,000 colleagues in more than 150 countries work every day to help people stay happier and healthier longer and to reduce the human and economic burden of disease worldwide.

[1] "ACCME Essential Areas and Elements: 2006 Updated Decision-Making Criteria Relevant to the Essential Areas and Elements -- Accreditation with Commendation." ACCME website: http://www.accme.org/dir_ docs/doc_upload/f4ee5075-9574-4231-8876- 5e21723c0c82_uploaddocument.pdf.

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