



American Academy of  
**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

CME Planners and Providers,

**Alert:** As of Jan. 1, 2014, AAPA can no longer accredit CME talks receiving grant support from Boehringer Ingelheim

**Executive Summary:**

It has come to our attention that the grant application requirements of Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) are out of compliance with standards designed to ensure the independence of your programs from commercial bias and/or conflicts of interest.

Anytime a grant application asks for the names of faculty, as BI's currently does, it is out of compliance and cannot be accredited for CME.

We ask that you try to comply with this immediately, but recognizing planning and grant writing lead time, will not make this mandatory until Jan. 1, 2014. AAPA is implementing this immediately for our own programs, and recently withdrew a large grant that was expecting approval when this came to our attention.

**Detailed background:**

The core issue is independence from commercial influence. Faculty can be used as a proxy for content that clearly undermines independence. The Office of Inspector General has expressed concern to industry over this practice in the past, and as the accrediting body for physician assistant CME, we see this as out of compliance with the ACCME Standards for Commercial Support to which we adhere. As the accrediting body for allopathic physician CME providers offering AMA credit, ACCME has expressed the same concern in the past. Any stipulations seeking information about faculty beyond the criteria used to select them, is out of compliance. CME providers cannot receive guidance, either nuanced or direct, on the content of an activity or on who should deliver that content. The responsibility for ensuring quality of faculty used rests with the organization providing CME and AAPA as their accrediting body -- not the grant supporter. Anything that undermines this role also undermines independence. From an accredited CME organization's perspective, this is a question that should not be answered, as it is both inappropriate and has a high likelihood of becoming a liability to your organization and AAPA in the future. This is an example of the American Academy of Physician Assistants -- type of practice undergoing increased scrutiny by regulators and the media. No matter how it is rationalized, in today's environment, perception is reality and neither of our

organizations can defend this practice that can easily be characterized as a proxy for content control.

AAPA has engaged in multiple levels of communication with BI about this issue. They know our concern, but at this time do not plan to remove this question. If you have a concern, we would encourage you to address it directly with BI. They are the only ones who can have this restriction removed.

Effective, Jan. 1, 2014, AAPA will not accredit CME sessions that have received grant support from BI as long as this question remains a part of their grant application. This only applies to single session(s) supported by BI and does not affect other sessions. Answering the question is out of compliance, and we have no mechanism to ensure it was not answered when we review your CME application. If this non-compliant question is removed, we will again review these sessions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Saxton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Saxton, MEd, CCMEP  
Chief Learning Office and Senior Vice President  
American Academy of Physician Assistants

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