

## How we work with HCPs

**The pharmaceutical industry works with doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals (HCPs) in a number of ways – all focused on the development and delivery of life-changing and life-saving medicines to improve treatment for patients, helping them live healthier lives.**

A proportion of this work involves collaborating with HCPs whose extensive expertise and experience on the front-line of patient care can support improvements in medicines. Some of it involves sharing this expertise and educating HCPs on the latest developments so that they have the most up-to-date information when making treatment decisions with patients.

The pharmaceutical industry is committed to benefitting patients by operating in a professional, ethical, and transparent way. We do this through the [ABPI Code of Practice](#). In addition, there is extensive UK and European law relating to promotion of medicines. The ABPI Code reflects and extends beyond the relevant UK law.

### Advisory boards

An advisory board is a group of external experts invited to a meeting by a company to share their professional advice and insight on a specific topic. An advisory board takes place when a company has a genuine unanswered question to address, and the expertise and knowledge is not available within the company.

An ‘advisor’ is an expert in their area and could be a doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other healthcare professional. They could also be hospital trusts, patients, individuals representing patient organisations, and/or other non-HCP specialists, e.g. market access specialists. They are brought together to discuss specific unanswered questions/issues and support companies in developing solutions which will help patients.

Advisory boards help companies better understand the following types of scientific/healthcare-related issues:

- How diseases are treated in the UK and how HCPs make decisions about which medicines to use.
- The latest science or practice in a particular area of medicine.
- How to interpret results of studies on medicines.
- How current or new medicines might be used by HCPs to help patients.
- How to design clinical studies to show whether a new medicine works or not.
- Which diseases need better medicines and why.
- What differences there are in treatment of diseases in different areas or countries.

Advisory boards are not used to promote a company's medicines and must not be an inducement to recommend, prescribe, purchase, supply, sell or administer specific medicinal products.

Examples of questions which companies may ask for help from experts in an advisory board could be:

- Which patients will get the greatest benefits from our medicines, which should we be treating with another medicine?
- What do we need to do to help ensure patients can get the right medicine when they need it?
- How can we help health professionals ensure patients take their medicine?
- Does the medicine meet the needs of UK doctors, nurses, patients, and the NHS? If not, how can we ensure that it does?
- How should we design clinical studies to show whether the medicine works or not?
- How should we support doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and patients to learn about how to use the new medicine?
- What do patients experience when they have a particular disease or are being treated for that disease?
- What does the information from a clinical study tell us about the medicine?

Examples of advisory board outcomes could be:

- Development of treatments for osteoporosis where a medicine is taken once a week or once a month, rather than daily, to fit better with patients' needs.
- Developments in how to treat dementia are better understood because of the involvement of doctors and industry scientists and experts in researching the disease.
- Understanding the complex care involved in treating rare diseases, including rarer cancers.
- Publication of relevant patient materials for healthcare professionals that support doctors and nurses to help patients take their medicines at the right time, in the right way.

### **Consultancy (contracted services)**

Refers to activities through which a healthcare professional provides a company with a service. Companies enter into a contractual arrangement with an HCP where there is a legitimate business or scientific need that cannot be satisfied by internal or other available sources.

These relationships are based on the HCP's scientific and/or medical expertise, reputation, knowledge, and experience in a particular area. This is applicable for a range of activities, such as:

- Speaking or chairing meetings where HCPs are learning about a particular disease and how to treat the disease from another HCP who is more experienced in treating that particular disease, for example, a hospital consultant may speak at a meeting of GPs.
- Participating in advisory boards
- Running clinical trials to monitor patient safety whilst getting information about whether a new medicine works or not
- Training company employees to better understand the disease they are working to treat
- Working with doctors and scientists in the company to advise on better medicine development

Participation in advisory boards and delivery of consultancy services requires an investment of time and expertise from HCPs, over and above their usual work. Therefore, it is appropriate that they are paid for their time and reimbursed for expenses such as travel, when undertaking these activities in collaboration with companies. The fees will be in proportion to the time spent by the HCP and their level of expertise.

### **Events & Engagement**

Pharmaceutical companies may hold, sponsor or support delegates to attend a wide range of events/meetings, providing such events/meetings meet the requirements of the ABPI Code Of Practice. This is carried out either by sponsoring healthcare professionals to take part, or by paying HCPs with specific knowledge to contribute at these events, therefore sharing further knowledge and understanding around a particular healthcare issue.

The UK industry also occasionally sponsors/supports HCPs in attending international events, as either attendees or contributors.

The UK healthcare system and the HCPs that work within it are highly regarded worldwide. By engaging with fellow HCPs on an international platform, they are able to gather and share information on medicines and treatments worldwide. Sharing information and best practice on state-of-the-art treatments is a driver of better healthcare and improving patient outcomes.

Healthcare systems continue to face resource challenges; the availability of education and training is often limited. By sponsoring HCPs to attend events the industry plays a key role in supporting access to education and training.

In the case where HCPs are paid to contribute to educational meetings/events, e.g. as a chair or speaker, as with any professional group providing services, it is fair and appropriate to remunerate HCPs for their time and expertise.

For those sponsored/supported to attend educational meetings/events, as delegates or speakers, it is common for companies to pay both the registration fees and reasonable expenses incurred by the attending HCPs.

### **Who benefits from these activities?**

Sharing knowledge is at the heart of these interactions with healthcare professionals:

- *Companies* shape their future research programmes based on expert opinion. Understanding how a medicine fits into the patient pathway helps companies provide the right information, education and training, to support the introduction of a new medicine, to ensure the best outcomes for patients.
- *Doctors, nurses and other HCPs* benefit from sharing ideas and learning from colleagues, through building their own understanding of the science behind new treatments.
- *Patients and their families* are the ultimate beneficiary of the interaction between HCPs and the industry, through advancements in clinical practice and patient care and the development of new, innovative treatments and by having HCPs who understand how to use the right medicine in the right patient.