

The Allergy Academy Code of Conduct for working with the Commercial Sector

Summary of principles

The Allergy Academy provides translational education in the recognition and management of patients with allergic disease.

This Code sets out policy and provides guidance regarding the nature of the professional working relationships between Allergy Academy staff, healthcare professionals and the commercial sector.

The Code's principles for transparent and ethical working practices are summarised below;

- The Academy promotes best health care practice through prioritising evidenced-based resources and well-established national and international guidance in a way which is appropriately targeted for the specific audience concerned.
- To ensure compliance across the Health Sector, the Academy ensures openness and transparency in accordance with the 'Code of Conduct; Code of Accountability in the NHS'
- Meetings and hospitality will remain proportionate and compliant with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) standards.
- The Allergy Academy will work within the European framework regarding the General Data Personal Protection (GDPR) to safeguard delegates' attending events and requesting membership with the Allergy Academy.
- The Academy is committed to impartiality between sponsors that bring competing products into the same market area.
- Declarations of conflict of interest will be sought from speakers and shared alongside content where possible.
- Product samples, marketing and industry stands will be centred outside of the rooms used for educational purposes in line with ABPI standards.
- Activities undertaken by the commercial sector will not be endorsed without oversight of content and governance through the Academy, ensuring that they are consistent with the principles outlined in this policy.
- Development of new initiatives and research activities will be maintained within the practice of Good Clinical Practice and will not compromise service management or standards of care for any patients who are treated within affiliated NHS departments.
- The complaints procedure will be led by directors of the Allergy Academy in collaboration with the Allergy Academy team members and will result in written documentation being returned to the complainant within two weeks.
- Review of this code and communication practices relating to this code will be undertaken each year to maintain conduct within contemporary standards laid out in applicable guidance.

Context and rationale for this Code of Conduct

There is a gross lack of provision and planning for allergy education from across under-graduate and post graduate curricula in the UK, which has exacerbated an existing under-provision in allergy care. The management of NHS patients with allergic disease is primarily undertaken by healthcare professionals in primary care, amidst extremely challenging financial and management pressures. The



demand for allergy care accounts for 8% of all general practice consultations across the UK and that up to 11% of the total drug budget.(1) Regional events for training in allergy care are therefore necessarily being requested by primary care professionals. A proportion of patients with more difficult allergic disease are referred on to secondary care, where the majority are seen by dermatologists, paediatricians, respiratory specialists, gastroenterologists or ENT surgeons. These professionals are often confronted by a plethora of allergy-related co-morbidities, however have never had specific training in their management outside of their specialty. A systematic review has shown that primary and secondary care professionals lacked any specific training to manage allergic disease, although they bear the heaviest burden of clinical presentations.(2) Food allergy affects at least 6% of UK children and primary care practitioners report that the management of these cases is particularly challenging for them.(3) Poor knowledge of allergy management results in inappropriate medication costs, patient distress with ineffective advice and poor patient outcomes across the population.

The Allergy Academy

The Allergy Academy is a collaborative initiative run from the Department of Paediatric Allergy within the Department of Women and Children's Health of the Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine of King's College London (KCL). The Academy events aim to attract a diverse range of professionals who wish to access the best practice care guidance for the clinical management of asthma, allergic rhinitis, food allergy, nutrition and skin presentations of allergic disease, as well as providing more specialist topic based days on an occasional basis. These training events range from large scale flag-ship specialist educational events, to primary care regional training days and focused practical workshops.

Staff and Faculty of the Allergy Academy

The Allergy Academy supports an Allergy Academy Administrator at Manager grade on a permanent basis as well as a rotating twelve month Clinical Education Fellow post to be taken up by a qualified doctor who is undertaking specialist training in paediatrics. The remaining Academy staff comprise NHS-employed professionals. Two paediatric allergy consultants take the role of directing the Academy as a partnership with a third providing leadership for the multidisciplinary aspects of the events. These three clinical consultants are based within the Children's Allergies Department at St Thomas' Hospital and contribute regular timetabled sessions through their working week to running educational activities. The Academy also involves a wider range of multi-disciplinary professionals as part of the formal teaching Faculty. These professionals work within the Allergy Service of Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and provide teaching expertise on a collaborative basis for individual events. All staff who present, teach and coordinate the Allergy Academy activities remain at arms-length from commercial sponsors and maintain professional standards as highlighted in this guidance and in accordance with their profession's collegiate guidance where applicable. Speakers from other institutions are invited to contribute to educational events, however are not involved in the relationships between the Academy and the commercial sector and are therefore not responsible for upholding these principles.

The Directors of the Academy are responsible for the maintenance of principles described in this Code of Conduct. Professionals who work within the Academy have a collective responsibility for facilitating this process, and any processes for appraising individual's conduct will be relayed towards line-management structures.



Sponsorship

The Allergy Academy is funded by unrestricted grants from a series of commercial sponsors who exhibit at Allergy Academy events but have no influence on the educational content of teaching. The Academy has secured sponsorship from a number of companies that manufacture products within the allergy market space. Our founding and current commercial sponsors include pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies as well as members of the food industry. The range of sponsors who have been attracted allows representation across a choice of products in many areas, allowing the Academy to curate impartiality between these sponsors. An emphasis on using generic drug and product terms and maintaining impartiality between competing products underpin the principles for best-practice and evidence-based-medicine when applied across a wide range of regions and commissioning bodies.

The annual programme is planned by the Academy team. Sponsors may request and fund the Academy to run additional events. If sponsors request an educational event, they may request a theme for the day, however an open booking system will be run and our policy for impartiality recommends that competing companies will also be notified of the opportunity to make themselves present as the event is adopted into the programme. The Academy remains entirely responsible for the educational content of these additional events and will best maximise access and relevance to practice for the audience being invited. Closed round-table events may also be requested by commercial sponsors who wish to gain access to clinical opinion leaders. These events will not be made open to other professionals and will therefore not require impartial representation or governance regarding educational content.

Meetings and hospitality

Hospitality will remain proportionate to the events being run. The catering offered will be commensurate with the day course events offered and lie within the standard tariff offered by the venues being used. Accommodation will only be offered for speakers travelling from abroad or by particular arrangement after consideration of principles of equal access and proportionality.

Travel expenses will be offered to speakers and facilitators engaged in providing direct support for the educational events. The amount offered will cover standard class rail fair return tickets for regional speakers and economy flights with accommodation where necessary for international speakers. The expected expenses will be outlined to all speakers prior to each event and will be proportionate to the work undertaken. Honoraria may be paid up to the ceiling limit of £250 per event for a speaker where their main institution of work is within England.

Declarations

Educational presentations and material provided online will be accompanied by a declaration of conflicts of interest. The interests detailed will be appropriate to the content of the material being presented and declared as relevant if within the preceding 36 months, in line with recommendations laid out by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.



Products and endorsements

Product samples, marketing and industry stands will be distributed outside of the rooms used for educational purposes in line with ABPI standards.

Educational content will avoid discussing any specific brand names, unless there is an integral technical difference for the purposes of clinical practice. For teaching purposes, individual products may be discussed where differences between pharmaceutical agents, devices or investigations are of pertinence in clinical practice. The Academy requests that the generic name for products should be used primarily, unless the use of the branded product name is required in order to effectively communicate principles of practice.

Our panel of commercial sponsors will be acknowledged with due prominence on our website and within the programme booklets provided at the start of events. Commercial sponsorship representatives will be welcomed to set up stands in areas outside the educational forum at our events providing that funding arrangements and space allow.

Products and brand names themselves will not be specifically endorsed by the Academy. Activities undertaken by the commercial sector will not be endorsed by the Academy to protect impartiality. Jointly funded events with the commercial sector will only be endorsed where there is rigorous governance of the educational content by the Academy.

New initiatives

The development of new initiatives in clinical practice and research activities will be maintained within the principles of Good Clinical Practice. These activities will not compromise service management, standards or result in undue influence of staff or patients of the Department of Children's Allergies.

Openness and accountability

The Academy ensures openness and transparency by;

- Open discussion of this Code and its principles
- Documenting points of clarification alongside Memorandums used to engage with sponsors. Where necessary, these points of clarification may be shared with the sponsors concerned.
- Annual review of this Code to evaluate its contemporary value, adherence to it amongst staff and documentation made of its adjustment. Suggested review date at the end of the spring programme.
- Complaints can be made direct to Allergy Academy staff or anonymously through the Allergy Academy website (www.allergyacademy.org)

Complaints procedure

Complaints may be received direct via the Allergy Academy website, via email to Academy staff or verbally during one of the events. The complaints procedure will be managed by directors of the Allergy Academy and will result in written documentation being returned to the complainant within two weeks, unless an anonymous complaint has been received. The complaint will be shared amongst the immediate Allergy Academy team. Documentation will be retained and kept for review alongside the annual review of this code.

Review of code and communication practices

The principles of this Code constitute a framework for internal communications as well as discussing with other organisations where relevant. The Code will be reviewed in the summer of each year to allow assessment of;

- Delegates experience of compliance
- Staff and speakers' evaluation of progress
- Individual sponsors' relationships and expectations that have arisen
- Any new influences, complaints or emerging concerns from the wider network

This code relates to current guidance

- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's 'Blue Guide' 2014
- The Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority (PMCPA) guidance which administers the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's (ABPI's) Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry, published 2016.
- Best Practice Guidance on joint working between the NHS and pharmaceutical industry and other relevant commercial organisations – NHS - Prepared by: Medicines, Pharmacy and Industry Group, 2008
- Financial and commercial arrangements and conflicts of interest, General Medical Council, 2013
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors guidance, available at www.icmje.org

Authorship and conflicts of interest

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References

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2. Diwakar L, Cummins C, Lilford R, et al. Systematic review of pathways for the delivery of allergy services. *BMJ Open* 2016;7(2):012647.
3. Levy ML, Price D, Zheng X, et al. Inadequacies in UK primary care allergy services: national survey of current provisions and perceptions of need. *Clin Exp Allergy* 2004;34:518–9.