

July 16, 2008

Dear Health Care Community,

As part of our commitment to the health care community—educating over 120,000 U.S. physicians in 2007 representing over 417 million patient visits nationwide—we are contacting you today to share with you that Pri-Med endorses the positions taken by the [North American Association of Medical Education and Communication Companies \(NAAMECC\)](#) and the [Coalition for Healthcare Communication \(CHC\)](#) in regard to Pfizer's July 2<sup>nd</sup> statement released by the Medical Education Group to change its funding of continuing medical education (CME) in the U.S.

Today, the debate surrounding the relationship between physicians and pharmaceutical/biotech/medical device companies, and thus the organizations that operate in these areas, has cast a cloud of confusion and uncertainty on the continuing medical education enterprise. The public reporting on this issue has been prolific but limited in breadth to organizations, the government, and the media, without fully engaging the practicing clinicians in the dialogue. At Pri-Med, we aspire to give the practicing clinicians a voice in the discussion. We know that you share our belief that CME is essential to better patient care and that we should be focused on how to deliver more of the education that physicians need instead of looking for ways to restrict access. And that is why we are writing to you.

### **CME is Designed to Improve Patient Care**

According to the CHC's Statement on the Value of Independent Commercial Providers of CME, "Patient care is best served when accredited medical education companies are allowed to compete in the education marketplace because their entrepreneurship spurs innovation and competition for excellence in education as well as regulatory compliance. Many further believe that patient care is best served by quality education from multiple qualified and regulated providers." [The full statement is available on their website.](#)

### **CME is Designed to Address Physician Needs**

On July 3, 2008, following Pfizer's announcement, Pri-Med polled physicians in our Pri-Med member network asking them if they are in favor or opposed to Pfizer's ban on direct funding for physician CME programs provided by medical education and communication companies. One hundred ninety-two physicians voluntarily responded to the question within the first 24 hours and 86 percent said they oppose the decision. One doctor stated, "We need all the help we can get for any hope of staying 'current' today." [Please visit our Physician Insights page to view the poll results.](#)

Physicians tell us that they make their own CME choices based on the information they need to learn, in a way that is most accessible to them. Overall, in an independent, third-party conducted email survey, 86 percent of physicians agreed with the statement that "industry support does not influence or negatively impact their decision to attend a particular type of CME." CME is a bridge to the health care professional community and patient care. Medical education and

communication companies have the staff, technology, and relationships to respond to the immediate needs and time constraints physicians face by providing convenient, anytime access to CME. Today's complex health care environment requires physicians to be even more in tune to the latest advancements and developments in diagnosis, treatment, and management. Health care professionals tell us that they need more, not fewer, opportunities for CME across the continuum of live, online, and print formats, available nationwide in a way and place that is readily accessible to them in order to bring the best care to those who need it.

### **Conflict of Interest Must be Identified and Managed**

Like the current debate regarding CME, conflict of interest, potential or actual, exists in all facets of society. It is involved in every type of engagement—business to business, business to non-profit, non-profit to patient, all have conflicts. However, the overarching principle is that conflict of interest must be managed in the best interest of the public. For all contributors to the CME enterprise, regardless of their organization or business affiliation and regardless of whether they are a CME professional or a health care professional, they must be deliberately and diligently aware of conflict of interest and the need to resolve such conflict in order to act in their capacity in the best interest of the patient and the health care system. We must all work together. Proper management, through monitoring, transparency, and reaching joint goals that serve patient care, is essential. For example, we invite you to [review Pri-Med Institute's Ethical Guidelines for Collaboration with Educational Partners](#) as a potential starting point for the discussion to manage conflict of interest.

In a press release on the subject of a new protocol for funding CME, Pfizer stated, "Effective immediately, Pfizer is eliminating all direct funding for physician continuing medical education (CME) programs provided by medical education and communication companies (MECCs)." According to a quote in the release, the purpose of the funding change is to address the complex issue of conflict of interest.

### **Pri-Med does not believe that eliminating support for medical education companies will result in strong mitigation of conflict of interest within continuing medical education.**

As stated above, Pri-Med believes a healthy dialog, careful management, and collaboration between all constituents can provide a fair, balanced, and stronger CME solution to positively impact patient care.

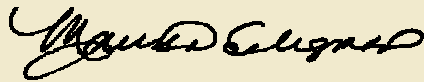
Let's remember that the U.S. Healthcare System is built for both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. Innovation, partnership, collaboration, and competition are the cornerstones to performance improvement in all industries, including health care. Therefore, the debate should not be about business models. The issues should focus on how all certified and recognized contributors can advance and deliver CME that is aligned to the U.S. Healthcare system. We all recognize that today's health care environment is complex. Physicians are required to stay up to date on the latest advancements and developments in diagnosis, treatment, and management. Who better to sustain this continued focus than organizations that are solely devoted to education that meets and exceeds the needs of the health care professionals it serves? All of us, together.

We encourage all parties to consider the true end point—the delivery of better patient care. As a leading provider of education and information, Pri-Med is working with numerous universities, medical associations, hospitals, and associations to define the best way to deliver CME, eliminate bias and conflicts of interest, and create transparencies to offer the best learning opportunities for health care professionals. We urge you to join the discussion. Please email us at [telltheceo@pri-med.com](mailto:telltheceo@pri-med.com).

Sincerely,



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