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An Open Letter to ACCP Members

April 12, 2010

Dear ACCP Member,

I am writing in reference to a new ACCP policy document, “**Organizational Guidance: Accepting Commercial Support**,” the release of which is announced in the lead story of the current issue of the *ACCP Report* (<http://www.accp.com/report/?iss=0410&art=1>). Publication of this document is an important action on the part of the ACCP leadership to safeguard the College’s reputation as an objective, independent professional organization. The full document, including frequently asked questions (FAQ), can be downloaded at www.accp.com/docs/positions/positionStatements/CommercSuppPolicy.pdf.

Every ACCP member is aware of the attention and scrutiny currently directed at interactions between the health care industry and health care professionals. The reason for focusing on the relationships between industry and health professionals is that such relationships offer the potential for actual and/or perceived conflicts of interest—and these conflicts pose the risk of undue influence on professional judgments.¹ Of course, professional societies are not, nor should they be, insulated from this concern.²⁻⁴ Because industry provides funding for a variety of professional organizational activities, the ACCP leadership undertook a year-long examination of this issue. This process included review of current College activities that receive commercial support, discussion and analysis of published commentaries and guidelines on this issue, and solicitation of input from the ACCP membership at-large and leaders of ACCP’s PRNs and regional chapters. The ACCP Board of Regents, ACCP Research Institute Board of Trustees, and *Pharmacotherapy* Board of Directors relied on this process to reach an informed policy decision. Earlier this year, all three boards endorsed the policies set forth in the final policy document.

I encourage you to read this document, including not only the policy statements themselves but also the FAQ section that helps to further explain and illustrate many of the implications of the specific policy statements. Because I am concerned that some members may not fully appreciate the intent behind developing this policy document, or may misunderstand its implications, I chose to write this open letter.

First, many members may ask, “Why is ACCP doing this? Aren’t we one of the most independent, least commercially-influenced professional societies?” I certainly believe the latter assertion to be true—and I hope that we have taken the steps necessary to ensure that this observation will not be questioned. We chose to release these policies now, almost three years before their January 1, 2013 effective date. The two major reasons for this early release are 1) to allow members, organizational leaders, and association staff the time necessary to plan the steps that must be taken to compensate for the resulting decline in commercial support, and 2) to declare the organization’s commitment to maintain the high-

degree of professional integrity reflected by the document's "guiding principles" section.

Second, let me underscore the important premises upon which we based the development of this document: namely that commercial support of the College's continuing pharmacy education (CPE) programs should be eliminated and that any remaining forms of commercial support provided to the College should be transparent. This means, for example, that there should be little or no confusion among members regarding the independent, non-commercial nature of any educational program offered during our meetings. Similarly, advertisements in *Pharmacotherapy*, or similar commercial activities in the Annual Meeting exhibit hall, will be easily recognized by members as being promotional (i.e., not CPE activities).

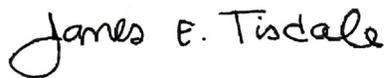
Third, I want to address a common misconception that the College is "anti-industry" and that this policy document serves to further an anti-industry sentiment. This is simply not true. I believe that the College can work together with industry in more meaningful ways than simply through the receipt of monetary support. For example, I think that we are both interested in measuring the quality of drug therapy outcomes that might be explored together through post-marketing surveillance activities, an objective that the College's members and its Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN) are well-positioned to address. I believe that we are both dedicated to advancing the contributions that clinical pharmacists make to many facets of industry and the business of health care, whether it involves drug development, regulatory affairs, medical affairs, or even health information technology. It seems to me that we are all dedicated to helping patients make better use of their medications by improving access to therapy, medication adherence, and the monitoring of medication therapy outcomes. Indeed, there are many areas of mutual interest that extend beyond the provision of commercial support for College CPE programs and other general activities.

In closing, let me emphasize the extraordinary importance of maintaining the College's integrity as an organization and its identity as a leader of the clinical pharmacy discipline—characteristics that I hope drew you to join ACCP in the first place. It's true that we are all confronted today with increasing demands in the face of declining resources. In addition, many of us are experiencing personal economic pressures, pressures shared by other health professionals, and we are looking for new sources of financial support. As an organization, the College finds itself faced with similar challenges. However, it is during such times as this that we must fall back on our core values—values that have served us well and that lend strength and integrity to the organization. By invoking these values and translating them into guiding principles and policies regarding the acceptance of commercial support, I believe we have made an important contribution to the future standing of the College and its members.

Open Letter to ACCP Members
James E. Tisdale
April 12, 2010
Page 3

As always, I invite your comments. Please send them to me by e-mail at accp@accp.com, inserting the word “Tisdale” in the subject line.

Sincerely,



James E. Tisdale, Pharm.D., FCCP, FAPhA, BCPS
ACCP President

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