

EFPIA Guideline on a Quality Framework of Principles in Lifelong Learning in Healthcare

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To the Editor,

Lifelong Learning (LL) is defined by the European Commission as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences[1]. For healthcare professionals LL is essential for the provision of an optimal standard of patient care. Lifelong Learning in Healthcare (LLH) in Europe includes a variety of educational forms, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) including Independent Medical Education (IME), with or without formal accreditation, as well as non-accredited medical education activities offered by a variety of education providers and according to different national regulations. Some activities are either lead or funded by the pharmaceutical industry. This involvement of industry in medical education has been described in a detailed analysis[2].

The pharmaceutical industry has a longstanding commitment to engaging and innovating in LLH, partly to provide evidence to ensure its innovations are used safely and in the appropriate patient populations, but also due to its large geographical footprint to support or provide learning opportunities for healthcare professionals (HCPs) in countries with relatively limited access to LLH offerings. In addition, the pharmaceutical industry is frequently at the forefront of clinical research in association with academic investigators and supports the translation of scientific advancements into clinical practice.

As the approach to LLH was not fully aligned across the pharmaceutical industry, and to ensure that the quality and conduct of industry funded or led LLH activities are appropriate, Article 16 of the EFPIA Code was published to ensure that LLH activities are distinct from promotional activities [3]. In addition EFPIA created a working group of industry specialists, and representatives from national associations

who have produced a guideline for member companies to align on quality criteria[4]. Furthermore, to ensure a broadly-based input into the LLH quality guideline, external stakeholders, representing medical societies, academia, healthcare professionals, and patient organisations were invited to provide feedback on the industry LLH guideline during an Advisory Round Table meeting in 2020.

The principles of ethical, transparent and responsible engagement, quality content and robust processes incorporated in the guideline have been well accepted also by other organisations[5] and are regarded as having relevance to all learning activities. By ensuring promotional activities are separate from LLH and introducing the quality guideline for EFPIA member funded or led LLH activities, it is expected that the greater transparency of industry LLH activities will ensure an aligned quality approach.

The purpose of this recently published document is to provide further guidance for industry for the implementation of Article 16 of the EFPIA Code. The guideline must be read with the requirements and spirit of the Code in mind and applied in accordance with applicable country laws and regulations.

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