



# Relationships with Pharmaceutical, Medical Device, Research, or Other Companies

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## Relationships with Pharmaceutical, Medical Device, Research or Other Companies: Frequently Asked Questions

**There are times when a pharmaceutical company sales representative contacts me, the support group leader, directly and offers to arrange for speakers and refreshments for upcoming meetings. Is this an acceptable practice?**

No, it is not. It is the responsibility of Society staff to explain to their pharmaceutical and medical device companies that representatives are not to directly contact and support the Society's support groups.

Pharmaceutical and medical device sales representatives may find and fund speakers for support group meetings, as well as pay for and provide refreshments. Your Society staff partner is to coordinate these types of requests and should approve of the speaker and proposed content first. When introduced, the speaker must fully disclose that he/she has been paid an honorarium by the pharmaceutical company. If the speaker plans to use handouts provided by the company, the Society must review the handout in advance. The pharmaceutical or medical device sales representative is not allowed to be present at the meeting.

If a pharmaceutical or medical device company sales representative contacts you directly with a request to bring in a speaker and/or provide food and refreshments for a meeting, please refer the request to your staff partner and let the representative know you have done this.

**My support group has a situation where a pharmaceutical company sales representative attends each meeting, providing snacks, befriending members, etc. She is genuinely liked and appreciated by the group members. Is it okay for her to attend the meetings?**

While the sales representative may be a genuinely caring and generous person, her presence at the support group is ultimately to promote her company's product. This goes against Society policies, in some cases against the pharmaceutical company's policy, and it

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may send a message to the group's members that the Society supports this company's product. Your staff partner should speak to the sales representative and advise her that her attendance is not permitted at meetings in the future. Other employees of pharmaceutical companies, such as a nurse educator, may attend support group meetings but should not promote a particular treatment to the group.

**I receive emails or phone calls from researchers or research companies asking for me to promote recruitment for different MS research studies. Can I share this information with my group members or forward a list of names to them for possible participation?**

No, you should not. You should first contact your staff partner to find out if the research study has been vetted and approved by the Society. If it has been, you can share that information with your group members. If it has not, you should not share the information with your group members. You should never release information about your group members to any outside group.

**I have started receiving calls and contact from local medical marijuana dispensaries. Can I have a speaker talk to our group about medical marijuana or cannabis?**

Yes, you can, but the same guidelines apply as those we use with other pharmaceutical industry partners. Direct all inquiries to your staff partner and your partner can then share our policies on working with industry partners and the Society's policy on medical marijuana.

To be consistent with our guidelines, if approved by the staff partner, only medically qualified personnel (physicians, nurses, pharmacists, etc.) should speak at support group meetings and materials or content delivered should be approved beforehand.

Representatives from the medical marijuana industry (such as sales representatives, or staff from the dispensary or grower) are not acceptable speakers. The agenda should only focus on medical use, even in states where recreational use is approved.

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