

European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis

Code of Conduct for Independence and Integrity

Adoption and Acknowledgement

This Code of Conduct is binding on all members, staff, and representatives of ECTRIMS. Upon accepting any leadership role within ECTRIMS' governing bodies, whether elected or appointed, individuals commit to upholding this Code of Conduct.

1. Purpose and Scope

This Code of Conduct establishes the principles and guidelines that govern the relationships between the European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis (hereafter referred to as "ECTRIMS") and the pharmaceutical industry, medical device manufacturers, and other commercial sponsors (hereafter referred to as "commercial sponsors"). Its aim is to preserve ECTRIMS' independence, credibility, and commitment to advancing the understanding and treatment of MS.

2. Core Principles

Independence

ECTRIMS shall remain free from undue influence or conflicts of interest in its decision-making processes, activities, and priorities.

Transparency

All relationships with commercial sponsors shall be openly disclosed to stakeholders, including members, partners, and the public.

Integrity

ECTRIMS shall ensure that its activities, policies, and communications reflect unbiased, evidence-based practices that prioritise the advancement of research and the improvement of clinical outcomes in MS.

Accountability

ECTRIMS shall maintain mechanisms for monitoring adherence to this Code of Conduct and address any breaches promptly.

3. Guidelines for Engagement with Commercial Sponsors

3.1 Funding and Sponsorship

ECTRIMS may accept funding from commercial sponsors only if such funding does not compromise its independence or create conflicts of interest.

All sponsorship agreements must be formalised in writing, specifying the purpose, scope, and limits of the sponsor's involvement.

ECTRIMS retains full control over the content, format, and dissemination of any activity or material funded by commercial sponsors.

3.2 Scientific and Educational Activities

Educational and scientific programmes organised by ECTRIMS shall be developed independently, based on objective criteria and without input or approval from commercial sponsors.

Commercial sponsors may provide financial support for such activities but shall not influence the selection of topics, speakers, or content.

Any financial support from commercial sponsors shall be clearly disclosed in all promotional materials and event documentation.

3.3 Advertising and Exhibits

Commercial sponsors may purchase advertising or exhibit space at ECTRIMS events, provided it is clearly distinguished from educational content.

ECTRIMS shall retain the right to review and approve all advertisements and exhibits to ensure compliance with its mission and values.

3.4 Use of Logos and Branding

ECTRIMS shall not permit commercial sponsors to use its name, logo, or branding in any manner that implies endorsement or approval of the sponsor's products or services.

Any use of ECTRIMS' branding must be pre-approved in writing and limited to specific, mutually agreed-upon purposes.

3.5 Research Collaborations

Any research partnerships with commercial sponsors must prioritise scientific integrity, transparency, and the public interest.

ECTRIMS shall retain full ownership of research data and control over the publication and dissemination of findings.

3.6 Governance and Decision-Making

Representatives of commercial sponsors shall not participate in ECTRIMS' governance or decision-making bodies.

ECTRIMS' leadership and committees shall be composed of independent experts, free from significant financial ties to commercial sponsors.

4. Disclosure and Transparency

A conflict-of-interest policy shall be implemented and regularly reviewed, requiring disclosure of any personal or financial ties to commercial sponsors by ECTRIMS staff, leaders, and contributors.

ECTRIMS does not accept mono-sponsorship for its activities and initiatives.

5. Monitoring and Enforcement

Breaches of the Code may result in termination of relationships with commercial sponsors, disciplinary actions, or other measures as deemed appropriate.

Regular reviews of the Code shall be conducted to ensure its alignment with best practices and evolving ethical standards.

6. Commitment to Public Health

ECTRIMS reaffirms its commitment to prioritise the health and well-being of the public above all other considerations.

All decisions and activities shall be guided by evidence-based principles and the highest ethical standards.

7. Amendments

This Code of Conduct may be amended by ECTRIMS' governing body following consultation with members and relevant stakeholders.