GUIDELINES TO WORKING WITH THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Background

The relationship between patient organisations and the pharmaceutical industry has come under increasing scrutiny in recent times. Both the media and leading politicians have questioned the ability of organisations to maintain their impartiality and independence in the face of receiving (sometimes significant) funding from industry.

The Stroke Association understands the importance of working in partnership with all stakeholders who have an interest in stroke, including the pharmaceutical industry, to achieve common goals. The Stroke Association recognises that working with pharmaceutical companies that manufacture and market drugs and treatments gives the organisation important background knowledge and provides positive networking opportunities. The Stroke Association also acknowledges that collaborative working and financial support from pharmaceutical companies is vital for the growth of the organisation. However, The Stroke Association also recognises the need for such partnerships to be transparent and able to stand up to scrutiny.

As a result, The Stroke Association has developed this document to define how the organisation engages with the pharmaceutical industry. This will ensure that The Stroke Association can withstand external scrutiny of its decisions and actions whilst at the same time allowing the organisation the freedom to work in a way which ultimately benefits stroke survivors.

About the guidelines

This document defines how The Stroke Association works with pharmaceutical companies and other commercial organisations related to the industry. This is important to ensure that The Stroke Association:

• demonstrates its independence and impartiality
• is transparent, consistent and fair when working with industry
• maintains its integrity and reputation within the charity as well as within the external cardiovascular community and wider health sectors
• remains true to its patient-centred approach, putting stroke survivors at the heart of everything it does to ensure best possible outcomes
• shows its commitment to working collaboratively with pharmaceutical companies, alongside other stakeholders involved in stroke, to improve patient outcomes
• remains accountable to its internal and external stakeholders

All pharmaceutical companies that The Stroke Association works in partnership with will receive a copy of this document and must agree to work within its principles. The guidelines also complies with other relevant best practice guidelines and codes that have been put in place to ensure a clear, transparent and honest working relationship between pharmaceutical companies and the charitable sector, such as those produced by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the Association of the British Pharmaceutical
Industry (ABPI), the Fundraising Standards Board (FSB) and the Institute of Fundraising’s Codes of Practice. The Stroke Association is transparent about any financial support it receives and will use its best endeavours to ensure that agreements comply with both the regulatory requirements detailed by the boards above and these guidelines.

**Rationale for working with industry**

The Stroke Association works with pharmaceutical companies for a number of important reasons:

- to obtain important background information on treatments, diagnostic tests and medical devices that could benefit people who have had a stroke and improve the quality of treatment and care provided to them
- to enable us to produce factual, accurate, impartial and up-to-date information for our website and written publications on medication for people who have had a stroke
- to provide opportunities to raise awareness of stroke and to improve the quality of treatment and care in stroke, including access to medicines and specialised services
- as an organisation which is dependent on voluntary donations, The Stroke Association also relies on a wide variety of funding sources, including funding from pharmaceutical companies
- The Stroke Association is committed to developing a variety of long-term dependable income sources to fund the organisation’s work.

**Current support**

The Stroke Association continues to have an open and transparent discussion with pharmaceutical partners around current strategy and possible joint-working opportunities. This allows all members to voice their thoughts and ideas and for pharmaceutical partners to become involved in activity where appropriate.

Partners may undertake full or part sponsorship of a specific project of mutual interest and of benefit to the stroke community. This does not lead to automatic endorsement of the company or its products as the companies have no input to the design or content of any Stroke Association branded programme, project or campaign. Partners may also offer pro-bono support or agency assistance with a project. Again, this does not lead to automatic endorsement of said company or its products as the company in question merely lends its professional expertise to benefit The Stroke Association and the project. The company has no influence into the design or content of the project despite providing professional expertise to advance or enhance it.

This does not apply to financial support which The Stroke Association may receive from charitable trusts or foundations associated with pharmaceutical companies. The Stroke Association is satisfied that charitable trusts and foundations may make any grants in accordance with their charitable objectives and therefore the risk of a potential conflict of interest does not arise.

**Basic principles**

The Stroke Association will only work with pharmaceutical companies where:

- the activity being supported is within the organisation’s strategic aims
- the activity meets the criteria and conditions outlined in this document or has been approved in advance in accordance with internal appraisal processes
- the relationship is not subject to any conditions that are unacceptable or conditions that prevent The Stroke Association from acting in the best interests of stroke survivors and
their families

- The Stroke Association will enter into written agreements with pharmaceutical companies with whom we work which document the agreed terms and conditions
- The Stroke Association can ensure that independence is maintained so that the organisation is free to speak freely and comprehensively in a balanced way about pharmaceutical companies;
- The Stroke Association can ensure compliance with the conditions of the ABPI Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry. Where a company is not a member of the ABPI, The Stroke Association will require written assurances that any partnership work or support will be conducted to the ABPI Code of Practice, with particular reference to the conditions that are the organisational priorities for the activity;
- The Stroke Association can ensure that editorial independence is maintained and that there is no input by industry sponsors into the design or content of any The Stroke Association branded programme, project or campaign
- the total amount of financial support from pharmaceutical companies will not exceed 10% of the total budgeted income of the financial year
- There is no expectation from the pharmaceutical industry regarding their specific medication if the company in question chooses to support the charity. The Stroke Association will not endorse or campaign for any specific product or drug