



Code of Practice for Sponsors of Pre-Congress Symposia Related to the ESPID Annual Congress, organized jointly by ESPID and the ESPID Foundation

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ESPID greatly values the mutually beneficial relationship it has with several commercial sponsors who contribute to the annual ESPID congress through financial sponsorship, by bringing delegates to the conference and by contributing to the scientific content of the meeting by organising sponsored Pre-Congress symposia.

The ESPID Board had updated this code of practice in an effort to promote and maintain consistently the highest standards in these symposia thus enhancing their value to ESPID members, other conference delegates and to the sponsors themselves. Sponsors are requested to study this document closely and to use it in planning and executing their symposia.

General Comments

The ESPID Board discourages industry sponsors from organizing non-official (i.e., bypassing the procedures described below) symposia or other educational events in connection with the ESPID Annual Congress (within 2 days before, during or after the Annual Congress in the same city or close region).

Industry sponsored symposia should always be clearly marked as being Pre-Congress, this applies also to the programme book, where they will be listed separately from the ESPID scientific programme.

Under no circumstance may the ESPID Logo be used for invitations to or while conducting such events, including oral or visual recordings of the symposium.

Invitations to Pre-Congress Symposia may be sent out by sponsors at their discretion but ESPID will not provide names and addresses of ESPID members and/or congress attendees.

Planning

Sponsors are requested to draw up a draft programme for their symposia including an overall title or theme, provisional talk titles and, if possible, provisional speaker names by 1st November of the year prior to the congress. This summary should be forwarded to the Chair of the Local Scientific Committee (LSC) and to the Board member(s) liaising with the LSC. Names and contact details can be obtained from the ESPID secretariat (espid@kenes.ch)

These summaries will permit the congress organisers to ensure there is not excessive overlap between symposia and to offer other comments and suggestions.

A finalised version of the congress symposium programme including learning objectives should likewise be forwarded no later than 3 months before the congress. Subsequent changes should be notified to the congress bureau immediately as they arise.

Choice of speakers

Most sponsors choose to invite independent experts of international standing and with excellent presentational skills. ESPID supports and encourages this.

The ESPID Board strongly discourages sponsors from inviting their own employees or speakers who otherwise have close financial or professional ties to their organisations to speak at these symposia. Although such speakers may be well qualified and have important messages to convey, the spectre of possible conflicts of interest inevitably undermines their credibility and thus the value of the entire symposium. Conversely it is often highly appropriate for a senior executive from the sponsoring company to chair the session and participate in discussion. Often this chairing is best done jointly with one of the senior independent speakers.

Topics and content of talks

While it makes complete sense that the choice of theme and specific titles should reflect current strategic priorities of the sponsoring company, it is important to remember that this is a scientific meeting, not a postgraduate training session. Therefore, pure product presentations must be avoided and presentations should be objective. Speakers should be asked to ensure that they summarise new scientific information or new concepts in their talks that is unlikely already to be familiar to this senior specialist audience.

Critically, and at all costs, any apparent “point scoring” relative to commercial rivals should be strenuously avoided as this greatly devalues the overall impression given of the scientific values of these sessions and greatly annoys many ESPID members who attend. Competition between speakers both within and between symposia should therefore be restricted to efforts to surpass each other in the originality of the data presented and the excellence of their presentations. Further, during pre-symposia briefing, sponsors may comment on but should not influence the content of the speakers’ presentations nor make changes to the speakers’ slides without their consent.

Speakers should be made aware that they are responsible for the content of their presentation and ensure that if slide editing is performed, it does not alter the content and remains compatible with their scientific objectivity and ethics.

Feedback

Since 2004, the ESPID Board has resolved to obtain written feedback from delegates concerning the sponsored symposia.

This is intended to provide valuable information to the congress organisers, the sponsors and the speakers themselves as to the value and impact of the presentations, to facilitate future planning.

Delegates will be invited to comment on a written form concerning each presentation individually and the symposium generally as follows:

- Importance of topic
- Quality and objectivity of scientific data presented
- Quality of presentation (including audibility, clarity and slides)

Each of these 3 will be rated: poor, fair, good, or excellent by the delegates. Results of the evaluation will be made available to the sponsor within 4 weeks after the Annual Meeting.

Assignment of time and length of industry sponsored pre-congress symposia

The ESPID Board and the LSC take the liberty to assign specific time slots to symposia proposed by sponsors. Should more requests for symposia be received than can be accommodated, the final decision on the acceptance of requests rests with the ESPID Board and will depend on various factors including the scientific value of the proposed symposium (as evaluated by the ESPID Board and the LSC) in the context of the overall scope of ESPID.