

THE ONCOLOGY NURSING SOCIETY, ONS FOUNDATION, AND ONCOLOGY NURSING CERTIFICATION CORPORATION COMMERCIAL SUPPORT POSITION

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) is a national organization comprising more than 35,000 oncology nurses and other healthcare workers dedicated to excellence in patient care, teaching, research, and education in the field of oncology. In this position on commercial support, "ONS and its affiliates" refers to ONS, the ONS Foundation, and the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation.

Continuing nursing education (CNE) is vital to the professional practice of all nurses. Providing high-quality educational opportunities for oncology nurses is central to the mission of ONS and its affiliates. From their inception, ONS and its affiliates have worked diligently to offer an array of substantial benefits and educational opportunities to members while keeping dues, registration fees, and other expenses affordable. Also, like other professional membership associations, ONS and its affiliates have obtained external financial support without sacrificing the integrity of program content, the Society, or its members. Outside support includes grants from foundations, federal and state agencies, and commercial interests. Without this support, organizations, institutions, and individuals might not gain access to the educational opportunities essential for maintaining quality in nursing practice.

ONS and its affiliates also receive commercial support for non-CNE activities, such as advertising, newsletters, and exhibit space. Although the policies summarized in this statement apply to CNE activities, the key principles guide ONS and its affiliates in the appropriate use of commercial support in all areas and in maintaining independence from commercial interests.

Following is a brief summary of the policies that ONS and its affiliates abide by and enforce to maintain the highest possible ethical standards regarding CNE activities. ONS should be contacted regarding any questions about the policies summarized in this position.

Commercial Support Policies for Nursing Continuing Education Activities

ONS has developed a general set of policies that guide decision making with regard to commercial support. The policies are based on an interpretation of the guidelines of the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation, the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America regarding ethical financial support from commercial interests. The policies ensure that CNE activities supported through educational grants by commercial interests are otherwise independent from the promotional influence of the supporting companies. ONS stays abreast of all agencies and policies governing CNE.

Independence

Educational grants are used for scientific and/or educational purposes and not for the purpose of promoting any product. ONS or an affiliate is solely responsible for the criteria, objectives, content, quality, and scientific integrity of all educational programs and publications. ONS or an affiliate is solely responsible for the selection of speakers and moderators. ONS or an affiliate is solely responsible for the allocation of grant dollars and decisions that affect the use of grant dollars, including the final selection of consultants and outside services.

Disclosures Relevant to Potential Commercial Bias

ONS and its affiliates disclose to program participants funding support received from companies. Faculty are required to disclose to participants any significant financial interests or other relationships with the manufacturers of any commercial products. ONS or its affiliates are the exclusive owners of all rights, titles, and interests in developed educational programs or products.

ONS or its affiliates are considered to be the author for copyright purposes, unless ONS or its affiliates have released and acknowledged such rights to an author or other copyright owner. Works cannot be reproduced or reformatted in any way without the express written consent of ONS, its affiliates, or other copyright owner.

Resolution of Conflicts of Interest

ONS and its affiliates maintain written procedures to resolve any and all conflicts of interest discovered or disclosed relevant to potential commercial bias. Resolution may range from clarification of disclosures to removal of the source of the conflict, up to and including refusal of funding or replacement of faculty or authors.

Appropriate Use of Commercial Support for Continuing Education Activities

ONS or its affiliates sign letters of agreement with commercial interests for all commercial support activities. A letter of agreement outlines an activity's budget, including administrative fees and out-of-pocket expenses as per ONS's travel policy.

Scholarships or travel funds to permit oncology nurses to attend carefully selected educational conferences are permissible as long as participant selection is made by ONS or its affiliates through an application process. ONS or an affiliate is solely responsible for the criteria and selection of recipients of all awards.

Appropriate Management of Associated Commercial Promotion in Continuing Nursing Education Activities

ONS and its affiliates maintain policies to ensure that commercial exhibits and advertisements do not influence the planning or interfere with the presentation of CNE activities. As a result, promotional activities (e.g., staffed exhibits, presentations, printed or electronic advertisements) must be kept separate from CNE activities.

Developing Continuing Nursing Education Activities Without Commercial Bias

CNE activities must promote quality or improvements in health care and not a specific proprietary business interest of a commercial entity. The content of the activities must comply with the ONS Evidence-Based Education Guidelines and give a balanced view of therapeutic options.

With these safeguards in place, ONS members and, therefore, patients with cancer, their families, and other caregivers are able to benefit from high-quality educational opportunities that are underwritten through commercial support and are free of promotional influences. ONS and its affiliates are proud of the exemplary manner in which they have worked with financial supporters to enhance the range of educational opportunities for those in health care without sacrificing their integrity or that of their supporters.

Approved by the ONS Board of Directors 11/97; revised 7/00, 6/02, 3/03, 12/05, 10/07. Reviewed 1/13.

Approved by the ONS Foundation Board of Trustees 11/97; revised 7/00, 6/02, 3/03, 12/05, 11/07.

Approved by the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation Board of Directors 3/03; revised 12/05, 11/07.