

NFTHD #20: Lanyards (explained)

This Notes from the Help Desk explores the use/gifting of lanyards and how this is interpreted through a Code lens.

Firstly, let's take a look at the graphic below which outlines what is and is not appropriate to offer a healthcare professional. It is ok to provide a pen and notepad to delegates at an event, and sharing medical education materials (including journals and resources) is also appropriate too. In the 'not ok' column, we have the usual suspects - items that have been off our menu for a while: as assortment of brand name reminders – as well as lanyards.

It is appropriate for Companies to provide educational items and resources to healthcare professionals and/or for use with patients as listed below. Such items must only be branded with a Company logo, and not with a product brand name.



Pen and notepad for the purpose of taking notes at an educational meeting



Medical educational materials, resources, reprints and meeting proceedings (may be physical or digital materials)

It is not considered appropriate for Companies to provide items to healthcare professionals that would be considered promotional aids or brand name reminders. Regardless of their value, such items are prohibited. The examples below are not exhaustive:



Lanyards, with or without company or product branding, at third-party educational meetings



Stationery supplies such as sticky notes, mouse pads, calendar and diaries



Clinic supplies (eg. hand wash, bed sheets, tongue depressors, machine cuffs)

Any items provided to healthcare professionals must be consistent with Sections 3 and 5 of Edition 19 of the Code. Simply removing the product or company name from these items does not make it acceptable.

The Code articulates that gifts are not to be offered or provided, which is supported by Overarching Principle 5 that sets out that companies will not inappropriately influence healthcare professionals. A bottle of wine, or a low cost trinket may not seem likely to influence in a negative way, but as an industry we have agreed that such items trivialise the valuable and professional relationship we strive for.

Medicines Australia is also a contributor and signatory to the [IFPMA Code of Practice and Ethos](#), which prohibits providing healthcare professionals with promotional aids (non-monetary items given for a promotional purpose) in relation to the promotion of prescription only medicines. In 2021, the IFPMA updated their guidance to ban the provision of lanyards and therefore Medicines Australia Code has followed suit.

Can we use plain, non-branded lanyards?

No, a plain lanyard cannot be provided. This instruction supersedes previous advice provided in 2021 that plain non-branded lanyards provided to healthcare professionals for the purpose of holding conference identification was acceptable. In fact, plain lanyards cannot be provided for the healthcare professional to keep outside of that meeting.

But what if we need lanyards to identify delegates?

The only scenario that could allow the use of company-provided lanyards is that of a loan situation. So, if you were to have a robust mechanism for loaning lanyards for the duration of the meeting and actively collecting them at the event end, ensuring no lanyards were unintentionally gifted to HCPs, then this would be possible and in line with the Code. This approach brings the Medicines Australia Code into alignment with the IFPMA Code of Practice and Ethos, of which Medicines Australia is a contributor and a signatory.

Guidance on Gifts, Offers and Company-branded Items is available in the Code Resource Toolkit.