

# NFTHD #28: HCP travel and unusual requests

In this Notes from the Help Desk, we explore the ethical boundaries of a situation where a healthcare professional requests to extend their travel for a legitimate purpose, such as attending a co-located meeting or conference.

In the long history of the Code, we have reconsidered the way industry provides travel for healthcare professionals in conjunction with an educational event. Historically, this included the ability to support a healthcare professional to attend a conference while their family joined them for a holiday. It is widely accepted that this behaviour is no longer appropriate, instead agreeing that funding direct travel for only the healthcare professional is appropriate. This established a precedent that industry can support travel and accommodation to attend an educational event, taking the most direct route, and no additional time for leisure.

But what happens when you have a healthcare professional who wishes to extend the travel for a legitimate purpose such as attending a co-located meeting/conference?

For example... a healthcare professional is speaking at a legitimate educational event but has asked for the travel to be delayed to enable them to attend to an activity related to their area of expertise. The healthcare professional is not seeking additional accommodation, hospitality, per diems or other support – simply the delay of a return flight. They have provided clear evidence of the activity they are staying on for, which appears legitimate and purposeful.

When the Code took the approach of limiting support to direct flights with no extra allowable time, it also allowed for companies to support healthcare professionals to 'stay on' after the closure of the sponsored event to attend legitimate and relevant activities – irrespective of whether the company is involved in the subsequent activity or not. This guidance remains in place as it strikes a balance between ethical guardrails and practical common sense, whilst supporting the quality use of medicines.

When initially devised, it was expected that this would be most appropriate during international travel, allowing healthcare professionals to maximise the long journey. However, it is not constrained to international travel, and can be appropriately applied to Australian activities

## **NFTHD #28 CONTINUED...**

Now – this is a reasonably simply request, with a clear decision presented. There are many examples where a healthcare professional has requested something that would clearly sit outside the Code. It's not a hard and fast rule, companies have the discretion to determine what is appropriate and how to navigate that individual relationship. Just remember the principle is that we should not facilitate or support our healthcare professional partners in a way that could inappropriately influencing them, or be perceived to do so. In addition, our member companies remain accountable by transparently reporting any value or paid interactions provided to healthcare professionals.

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