

NFTHD #37: Philanthropy, Patient Organisation Support or Third-Party Sponsorship?

In this Note from the Help Desk, we answer a few queries about Patient Organisation ('PO') support – specifically, when is it philanthropy, PO support, or indeed Third-Party?

Previously termed Health Consumer Organisations, Code Edition 20 has updated the terminology for this stakeholder to 'Patient Organisations' to better reflect global terminology. The definition of Patient Organisation in the Code still rings true: ... *“not-for-profit organisations, mainly composed of patients and/or caregivers, that represent the needs and interests of patients, their families and/or caregivers.”* They may range from small volunteer groups or large organisations, and generally promote views that are independent of government, the pharmaceutical industry and professional health service providers.

Medicines Australia member companies transparently report activities with patient organisations. Patient Organisations are also third-parties, so on face-value it could seem that there is overlap between what is classified as a Third-Party Educational Support and that of PO Support. However, the best yardstick to use is the primary audience of any event - a Third-Party Educational event/meeting/symposia is designed to educate healthcare professionals – and Patient Organisation events are generally designed to benefit patients. Transparency reporting should not be duplicated, so choose one report or the other, based on the information you have.

But when is sponsorship philanthropy and when is it Patient Organisation support? An example came up about a company providing financial sponsorship to a charity run which was organised for the primary benefit of fundraising for a particular disease. If a company sponsors the event directly, and that support is not made through or as part of any arrangement with a patient organisation, then it is not reportable. We consider this corporate philanthropy. However, if any such support or payment is made to that event as part of engagement with a PO, then it will need to be disclosed. Ultimately, transparency reporting is about maintaining public trust by providing visibility of the relationships that our industry has with key stakeholders.

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