

Recommendation No. 4 concerning the Pharma Cooperation Code (PCC)

HCO term: When does a health care organisation qualify as such, in order to disclose in their denomination according to the PCC?

Background

Essentially, a **broad definition of the term HCO is applied** to ensure the greatest possible transparency with regard to cooperation payments. This means that all institutions, organisations, associations and even just groups of specialists who provide healthcare services qualify as HCO, regardless of their legal form. Entities such as hospitals, clinics, foundations, universities and other educational institutions, scientific organisations and professional associations, group practices and networks therefore definitely qualify as HCO (see Section 13.8 PCC).

To avoid abuse, the guidelines of the Code Secretariat, state that **professional congress organisers (PCO) cannot qualify as HCO**, and that the actual HCO resp. healthcare professional (HCP) that will benefit has to be disclosed with regard to payments to such organisations. If an **organisation only provides organisational services to HCO/HCP**, it does not itself meet the criteria for qualification as HCO and the actual recipients of the funds have to be disclosed for payments made to the actual recipients.

The situation is more complicated when an organisation **independently organises advanced medical courses/further education, i.e. not on the instructions of one or more HCO/HCP or pharmaceutical companies**, and in this context enters into cooperation agreements with HCP and/or HCO representatives, and HCP and/or HCO representatives take part in such events.

Recommendation

Regarding this issue, the Code Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Code Commission, has developed the **following criteria, which justify the qualification of such organisations as HCOs in the sense of the PCC, provided that they are cumulatively fulfilled:**

- The organisation neither operates on the instructions of a pharmaceutical company nor an HCO/HCP, but solely of **its own accord**;
- The organisation can obtain the advice of an **advisory board** when choosing the topics and speakers, but **no industry or company representatives** may sit on this board;
- The **programme is compiled independently** without any input by industry/pharmaceutical companies;
- Industry/pharmaceutical companies **cannot influence the choice of speakers**;
- The event **may not be advertised by industry/pharmaceutical companies, except** for simple references to a supported event during a technical discussion;
- **Industry/pharmaceutical companies may not actively invite in any way** HCP or representatives of HCO to such an event;
- As a rule, **multi sponsorships** should be made mandatory and single sponsorships can only be permitted in exceptional cases where absolutely necessary;
- Any **satellite symposiums** organised by the sponsors should be identified as such and ownership has to be clearly disclosed.

If these **criteria are met**, the names of such organisations to which cooperation payments were made can be **disclosed** (provided that the organisation's consent has been obtained). If no reciprocal services are agreed, the payment would qualify as a donation/grant or otherwise as a sponsorship agreement, in which case the payments have to be disclosed in accordance with the contractual agreement.

Based on this catalogue, the Secretariat concludes that the following providers, listed **as examples**, fulfil the HCO concept as defined by the PCC:

- [Advisis Ltd.](#) – **only with regard to its advanced and further training courses**
- [Ärztetage Arosa](#)
- [Ärztetage Davos](#)
- [EDUMED AG](#)
- [Forum für medizinische Fortbildung \(FomF\)](#)
- [H+O communications Ltd](#) – **only for offers in the area of advanced training**
- [Kollegium für Hausarztmedizin \(KHM / CMPR\)](#)
- [Lunge Zürich](#)
- [Medical Tribune](#) – **only with regard to its training programmes**
- [Medi Week](#)
- [Quadrimed](#)
- [Swiss Insurance Medicine](#)
- [Responsible Organisation "Swiss Oncology & Hematology Congress"](#)
- [Zurich Heart House](#)

It should be noted that for those organisations listed with restrictions (Advisis Ltd., Medical Tribune and Pro Medicus), the HCO term only applies to the offers mentioned and not for other services provided.

For purposes of **clarification**, it also has to be pointed out that the decision taken by the Code Commission in 2014 means that **publishing houses do not qualify as HCO pursuant to Section 13.8 PCC** because they do not provide any direct healthcare services as defined by the PCC. It is more the task of publishing houses and similar organisations to print publications that will stimulate scientific debate. As a result, neither the costs of advertising in publications such as the [Schweizerische Ärztezeitung \(SÄZ\)](#) nor cooperation payments to [Oncoletters](#) or [Swiss Professional Media AG](#) should be disclosed. According to a statement issued by the latter, it also does not meet the criteria for advanced and further training courses.

The above list is **not exhaustive!** The **selection is limited to organisations** that have come to the attention of the Code Secretariat as a result of **enquiries**. It is the responsibility of the PCC signatory companies to test whether other organisations meet these criteria, whereby experience has shown that it cannot simply be assumed that an organisation meets the criteria. **On the contrary, if there is any doubt, it will be assumed that an organisation does not meet the criteria.** Enquiries can also be sent to the Code Secretariat, who would be happy to update this list, if necessary.