



NAAMECC

North American Association of Medical Education and Communication Companies, Inc.

August 13, 2008

BY ONLINE SUBMISSION; FEDERAL EXPRESS

Stephen J. Adler
Editor-in-Chief
BusinessWeek
1221 Avenue of The Americas, 43rd Floor
New York, NY 10020

RE: "Teaching Doctors – Or Selling to Them"

Dear Editor:

In its attempt to explain a critical sector of the healthcare field, BusinessWeek's July 31, 2008, article, "Teaching Doctors – Or Selling to Them," ironically employs the very device that it wrongly accuses medical education companies of employing – "selling" your readers on mistaken criticisms without really "teaching" them much at all about the underlying fundamentals.

The article's assertion that continuing medical education (CME) has become "one of the most profitable businesses" for "marketing firms" falsely equates independent, certified CME with pharmaceutical marketing and promotion. In fact, the *Standards for Commercial Support of CME* adopted by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) mandate that certified CME, funded by educational grants, meet strict standards intended to ensure that the CME is entirely independent from any direct or indirect influence or control by pharmaceutical or device marketers. Indeed, structural controls have also been adopted by the ACCME that require medical education companies that create CME be separate and distinct from marketing agencies, with appropriate firewalls to ensure and maintain that separation. The ACCME, likewise, demands that any organization engaged in the creation of CME be financially and functionally independent of any commercial interest that is engaged in the sale or provision of health care products and services or supporting those activities, i.e. promotional or marketing agencies.

Stated differently, "marketing firms" are not permitted under the rules of the ACCME system to receive educational grants from pharmaceutical firms. In an effort to "sell" the story but not to "teach" the real facts, BusinessWeek ignored these specific requirements for all accredited CME providers. All of these organizations, whether for-profit or not, are prohibited from certifying CME activities unless they have demonstrated the requisite degree of independence from marketing and other promotional activities.

Moreover, BusinessWeek ignored the fact that in order to be certified for physician-learner continuing education credit, all CME content must be clinically validated to ensure the information is evidence-based and free of commercial bias. While “bad actors” can admittedly exist in any field, your article unfairly and incorrectly stigmatizes and disparages accredited medical education companies that do not engage in promotional activity, as nothing short of a “little known breed of marketing specialists.”

In addition to propagating falsehoods and false accusations, the article maligns a group of companies that serve the medical community and the American public well by providing high-quality, independent CME activities. If BusinessWeek had done its homework, it would have established that medical education companies in fact fill an enormous educational gap that is unparalleled in other professions, as busy clinicians face longer work hours with decreasing reimbursement and struggle to even find the time to stay current on the explosion of new science, clinical trials and treatment options. Finally, the article also completely ignores the fact that all organizations involved in medical education that receive pharmaceutical CME grants – universities, hospitals, professional societies and medical education companies – must abide by the same rules and regulations to develop and deliver these educational activities.

For these reasons, the North American Association of Medical Education and Communication Companies (NAAMECC) asks that you correct the record in order to forestall further unfair and irreparable harm that will be suffered by the hundreds of independent small businesses that comprise NAAMECC and the CME community in general.

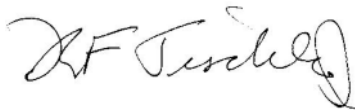
Sincerely,



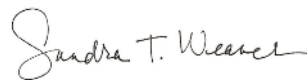
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cc: John A. Byrne, Editor in Chief