



Royal College of Physicians: Working with Companies and Professional Organisations

'Corporate Partnerships'

Question: *What is meant by the term 'Corporate Partnerships' and what are the implications for the RCP in having such relationships?*

What is meant by the term 'Corporate Partnership'? The aims of the RCP are to improve patient care and reduce illness. It is patient centred and clinically led, and drives improvement in the diagnosis of disease, the care of individual patients and the health of the whole population, both in the UK and across the globe. To achieve its aims, there is a need for the RCP to supplement its income by working with companies and professional organisations to raise additional funding. As a Registered Charity, the RCP can do this under the Charity Commissions rules. Engaging with a company or organisation in this way is known as a 'Corporate Partnership'. It is worth noting that any charity can have 'Corporate Partnerships', regardless of its size.

What are the implications for the RCP in having such relationships?

Benefits: The main benefit of the RCP in working with companies and other professional organisations through Corporate Partnerships, is that of raising additional income for the College. However other benefits could include an increased public awareness of the RCP, additional media attention and possible access to the company or organisations resources and staff. These will of course depend upon the nature of the Corporate Partnership that is agreed with the individual organisations.

Need to protect the RCP's name and reputation: In entering into a Corporate Partnership with a Company or organisation, it could profit through the relationship with the RCP unless steps are taken to control what the company can say about the partnership. In addition, the company could become involved in performing unethical activities which could then reflect badly on the College.

Before entering into a Corporate Partnership with a company the College should ascertain if it has had similar arrangements with other charities and Royal Colleges or Faculties and if they were successful. A check would also need to be made on their financial status. It would also be necessary to enquire if the company has similar values and ethics and do they match those of the RCP.

Working collaboratively under a Corporate Partnership arrangement: It would be hoped that working under a Corporate Partnership arrangement would be successful, with both parties benefiting from the relationship. However, disagreements relating to the ways of working could arise and it will therefore be important to put plans in place as part of the initial agreement to cover potential future conflicts, such as:

- use of the RCP name, logos and copyright – can they be used or not and if so, how and when and in what circumstance
- roles and responsibilities of each party – how will they be allocated

- money – how will it be transferred between both parties and are there any restrictions on its use
- success of the project under the partnership – how will this be assessed
- publication and media releases and interactions relating to the project – who leads this and who takes responsibility for this, it is always the RCP alone or could a joint effort be considered

Legal Requirements for Charities working under Corporate Partnership arrangements: By law, the Charities Commission requires that all Charities working under Corporate Partnership arrangements must have a contract in place with the company or organisation it is working with. There is also guidance from HM Revenue & Customs on Tax issues for Charities working with other organisations in this way (See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-detailed-guidance-notes/annex-iv-trading-and-business-activities-basic-principles>)

Ethical Collaboration Policy: It is noted that the King’s Fund, for their Corporate Partnerships, have an ‘Ethical Collaboration Policy’ in place which governs such relationships. The aim of this policy is to ensure that the partnership is open and that there are no conflicts of interest present that cannot be safely managed. Consideration should be given as to whether the RCP should also have a similar policy in place.

Other Considerations:

- The RCP should make it clear to any company or organisation that the College is governed by a selection of Professional Codes and Guidance Documents, such as the GMC’s ‘Good Medical Practice’ guideline etc, that they must abide by.
- The RCP will need to emphasise to any company working under a Corporate Partnership arrangement that transparency in the way it operates is an important attribute to maintaining its reputation
- In working with Pharmaceutical Companies based in the UK, the Corporate Partnership’s arrangement by any company with the RCP, will be declared annually on the ABPI Transfer of Values Disclosure Database.
- The RCP must declare that any Corporate Partnership agreements are in place when they relate to specific activities that the RCP provide, such as educational events etc.
- The RCP should be aware that any Company who engages into a Corporate Partnership may also be bound by their own Codes of Conduct, such as the ABPI Code of Practice for Pharma Companies. This may have an impact on what the company can do and not do as part of the relationship.

Professor Alan Boyd BSc MB ChB FRSB PFPM

President of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine

The Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom