

Society of General Internal Medicine Endorsement Policy
Accepted by SGIM Council March 6, 2009

Rationale

Endorsement is attaching SGIM's name to something else to promote that thing. Examples include products, drugs, devices, intellectual property, conferences, organizations, and policy positions. Wise endorsements can benefit patients and the public if they support products and policies that improve patient care, patient outcomes, and/or public health. However, endorsements can create conflicts of interest for SGIM because of potential financial, material, and political benefits to the organization.

SGIM has adopted the following criteria and process for endorsements to help the organization uphold its ethical principles. These criteria apply regardless of whether the product is made by a for-profit or not-for-profit organization. The SGIM "Policy on Acceptance and Disclosure of External Funds" focuses on guidelines for the acceptance of external funds. The SGIM "Endorsement Policy" clarifies additional aspects of endorsement, and builds on and does not replace the existing external funds policy.

Criteria for All New Endorsements

- 1) Endorsements must support SGIM's core mission which is: "We are dedicated to improving patient care, education, and research in primary care and general internal medicine." In particular, endorsements must benefit patients and/or the public, independent of any material benefit to SGIM such as revenue.
- 2) All new endorsements will not be exclusive. An endorsement agreement will not limit SGIM's right to make other endorsements, even if they are similar in nature to the one endorsed.
- 3) Endorsements will be time-limited and re-evaluated at least every three years. SGIM reserves the right to evaluate an endorsement at an earlier time interval if the interests of SGIM and the other organization diverge.
- 4) Terms of the endorsement agreement should be readily available to SGIM members and the public, and actively communicated to members.
- 5) Revenue from endorsements must fit within the constraints of SGIM's "Policy on Acceptance and Disclosure of External Funds".
6. Communications about the endorsement and uses of SGIM's name or logo require prior approval from SGIM.

Process

1. A proposal for endorsement by an SGIM member or SGIM constituent group shall be made following the Policy Pathway. Pursuant to the pathway, the proposal will be submitted first to the applicable SGIM Committee staff member (and, if an emergent request, the Executive Director and appropriate Committee Chair). Such staff member, in conjunction with senior SGIM staff, will review the proposal to assure that it is consistent with the SGIM Endorsement Policy prior to further review of the proposal according to the Policy Pathway, and will determine if the proposal should be reviewed by additional SGIM Committees. If it does not meet the Endorsement Policy criteria, it will be returned to those seeking the endorsement without further review.
2. Policy endorsements recommended by the SGIM Health Policy Committee that are within the terms of their annual Advocacy Agenda as previously approved by Council do not require further review or approval by Council or SGIM staff.
3. Except for policy endorsements described in paragraph 2 above, a proposal for endorsement by an individual or group outside of SGIM must be submitted initially to the SGIM Executive Committee and senior SGIM staff who shall review it against the Endorsement Policy criteria. Any proposal that meets these criteria and which they choose to pursue will then be forwarded to the SGIM committee(s) directly affected by the endorsement for their opinion and advice.
 - a. The relevant SGIM committees and staff will review the proposal for appropriateness and present their findings to Council.
 - b. Council must approve all endorsements.
4. Only the President and Executive Director have signing authority for any endorsement, whether made pursuant to paragraph 2 or 3 above. Prior contract review shall be done by SGIM's attorneys.

This policy will be revisited in two years in particular to re-examine the exclusivity clause as it applies to any of the old contracts.

Task Force to Create Guidelines for SGIM Endorsements

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