

CODE *of* CONDUCT *Competency Test*

Introduction

During 2010 EphMRA initiated training upon its recently revised Code of Conduct.

This training is to be complimented by a Competency Test – an OPTIONAL online test of members' knowledge and understanding of the Code of Conduct. EphMRA members who pass the test will be issued with a Certificate of Competency.

Only EphMRA Members can take the competency test – it is not available to non members. Non members of EphMRA can undertake the online training but then can't proceed to be certified.

Competency Test Goals

EphMRA's overall goal for the Competency Test is to encourage the highest ethical standards within primary healthcare market research carried out by members in international markets.

More specifically, the Competency Test is designed to ensure that:

- The Code of Conduct and its implications are understood
- Those commissioning, managing and executing MR have reached the requisite standard with regard to their understanding of the Code of Conduct
- Members can provide their working partners with evidence of their commitment to high ethical standards with their Certificate of Competency.

Competency Test

- The Competency Test takes the form of a series of 20 multiple choice questions
- It should take less than 30 minutes to complete
- The required pass mark would be 100%
- The test is marked automatically and a final score calculated
- If a question is failed, you will be able to stop the test and start again
- You are told whether they have passed or not at the end of the test
- Respondents will be able to take the Test as many times as they wish in order to pass

Certification

- A certificate accrediting members with their pass status will be issued after successful completion of the test
- The certificate can be printed off and states your name and a unique ID number
- The certificate could be used as proof of competency
- Certification would be valid for one year

Updating Competency Certification

- Members will be required to re-sit the Competency Test annually (12 months from the date of their first Test) to keep their certification current

Competency Test Content

This training will be based upon all of the key elements of EphMRA's Code of Conduct. Guidelines and regulations that span the territories will be included but knowledge of inter-country differences will not be tested.

All of the questions will be closed pre-coded questions (i.e. multiple-choice).

The examples below illustrate the type of approach that could be taken:

QUESTION - Which of the following are core principles that underpin the Code of Conduct?

Select ALL that apply

- a) Respondents must be honestly and clearly informed about the study
- b) Respondents rights are paramount
- c) Cash incentives are forbidden
- d) Observation of market research is strictly forbidden

ANSWER – a & b are core principles; whilst c & d are not, neither are they factually correct. Informed consent, this means that respondents must be honestly and clearly informed about the market research so that they can decide whether or not to take part and voluntarily agree to take part and give permission for the processing of their personal data. Respondents' rights are paramount, in particular their right to remain anonymous and their input will remain confidential must be protected, and their right to withdraw at any stage respected.

QUESTION - What role does the Code of Conduct allow healthcare professionals to play when it comes to the involvement of patients in market research studies?

Select ALL that apply

Healthcare professionals are allowed to:

- a) Invite patients to take part
- b) Pass on questionnaires to patients
- c) Pass back completed questionnaires to the agency
- d) Complete questionnaire in tandem with patient

ANSWER – a & b only

Physicians may act as intermediaries to recruit patients by inviting patients to take part or passing on questionnaires on behalf of the agency. Physicians must however ensure that patients understand that their participation is voluntary and they must not disclose the patient's identity to the agency until the patient has agreed to participate or this would compromise their anonymity. Physicians are not allowed to pass back questionnaires completed by patients or complete a questionnaire in tandem with a patient as the patient's anonymity and confidentiality would be compromised. Consent for c and d above could be given as long as the patient clearly understood that their responses could become known to the healthcare professional and so could not be guaranteed confidential.

QUESTION - Under what circumstances can respondents be re-contacted for follow up interview(s)?

Select ALL that apply

- a) Without re-contact permission, only if a question was accidentally missed out
- b) If permission was given at recruitment or initial interview based on an understanding of the purpose of the re-contact and who will make it
- c) Without re-contact permission, for quality control or data validation purposes only

d) *Under no circumstances can respondents be re-contacted*

Answer – b & c

If a researcher wishes to interview a respondent again - other than for quality control purposes, permission for the researcher/research agency to re-contact the respondent must be sought at the time of the recruitment interview or during the interview, even if only simple clarification is needed. Respondents can only be re-contacted if permission has already been sought and received. Re-contacting of respondents for quality control purposes or data validation does not require prior permission. Respondents agreeing to re-contact must be fully informed of the purpose of re-contact and who will make it – this is necessary for informed consent.

Source: BHBA Legal & Ethical Guidelines Competency Test 2009