



BRITISH THORACIC SOCIETY

POLICY STATEMENT: ENDORSEMENTS AND MAILING REQUESTS

Requests from external organisations for Society endorsement, and/or support of activities and publications; and response to external (government) policy statements and publications

1. Background

The British Thoracic Society is often asked to approve, or endorse, activities and publications of external organisations. This statement aims to summarise the Society's policy in this area for reference by BTS members and external bodies, in order to minimize confusion and assist an efficient and effective response to such requests.

2. What kinds of requests does the Society receive?

2.1 For several years, the Society has been responsible for the publication of *Guidelines* to support good practice in the treatment of lung disease, and there exists a detailed framework in which this work takes place (an updated statement about how BTS Guidelines are produced is pending from the Standards of Care Committee). It is often necessary to work with other organisations to prevent duplication of effort and synthesis expertise effectively (for example, the new British guideline on the Management of Asthma, February 2003). However, the reporting and support arrangements (via the BTS Standards of Care Committee) remain the same for all Guidelines in which the Society is involved.

2.2 Other groups working on Guidelines may approach the Society to endorse a draft Guideline or statement of good practice prior to publication. The approach may be made via the Society's head office, or directly to a member or officer of the Society. Apart from requests for endorsement, the Society may also be asked to provide a supportive statement; or for assistance with publication and/or circulation of a Guideline; or for involvement in a Guideline Committee.

2.3 The Society also organises *short courses* for CME and two major *Meetings* each year. Responsibility for these activities lies with two Standing Committees – the Scientific Meetings Committee and the Education and Training Committee. The Society is sometimes asked if it will include a sponsored session within its Meetings programmes, in the same way as is seen at meetings of the American Thoracic Society or

the European Respiratory Society. Also, external bodies, or BTS members who have developed courses, ask for the Society's 'seal of approval' on activities that they have planned, but which have not been discussed prior to launch with the relevant BTS Committee.

2.4 *Lung Charities* are active in policy work to a greater extent than in previous years, and frequently seek the views of the Society on a range of issues (for example, smoking cessation, the results of national audits on service provision for people with a particular disease, re-organisation of local services and so on).

2.5 The *National Institute for Clinical Excellence*, and other *Government and Department of Health* initiatives and committees seek the views of the Society on a range of issues. While this does not constitute a request for an endorsement, the principle (of providing a considered response which is congruent with BTS general policy) remains important and can be achieved following the undernoted principles and operational guidelines.

2.6 The re-launch of the *BTS website* has meant an increase in requests from commercial and non-commercial organisations for links to be made to (and from) the site. The present policy is that, while there is little to be done to prevent external sites referring to the BTS site, the Society's website will only contain references to external sites if they are:-

- Non-commercial
- Designed to be of assistance to people with lung disease and their families
- *and* there is a disclaimer when the link takes visitors out of the BTS site that the Society is not responsible for, and does not endorse the content of, the linked site.

3. General Principles

Requests from non-commercial organisations

3.1 The Society's response will depend on what the activity or publication is; whether there is time to respond effectively according to the standards set out below; and whether the activity or publication will have a national coverage.

3.2 The Society will not normally comment on activities and/or publications that have a local, rather than national focus.

3.3 If the Society is being asked to endorse a publication or position statement, or provide a supportive statement, the Chief Executive or member who has been approached directly must first check with the Chair of the Executive Committee. He will either make a reply directly; suggest which member/Committee should be asked to deal with it (quite often this will be the Standards of Care Committee, but not always); or ask that it be referred for discussion to the BTS Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will be asked for its advice if necessary, and will receive a report at each meeting on what has

been approved in the Society's name . If the Society is being asked to endorse a treatment Guideline that has been produced by an external organisation, it will wish to see evidence that the document has been subject to Peer Review and follows as far as possible the requirements of NICE or SIGN in relation to the preparation of Guidelines.

3.4 Where the Society is asked by a member to support or endorse a training course being established locally, it would not normally do so (see 2.3, above).

3.5 Where collaborative efforts exist (for example, the joint BTS/ARTP certificate and training courses), these should be subject to annual review by the lead Committee, and a formal recommendation made to the Executive Committee to continue these activities.

3.6 Requests for supportive statements in relation to campaigns and policy work by lung charities and others, plus requests from NICE and other government departments will be dealt with as in 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, above.

3.7 The policy relating to the BTS website remains as stated in 2.6, above.

3.8 The Society recognizes that its response to approaches from non-commercial organisations needs to be flexible, and will not always fit easily into the response framework outlined above, but it hopes that the general policy as outlined here will be of assistance.

Requests from Commercial organisations

3.9 The Society will NOT endorse or give permission for its logo or a supportive statement to be used on any activity or publication, teaching pack or audio-visual presentation if this is requested after the work has begun.

3.10 The Society *may* consider requests for involvement in the production of materials provided these are made before work is begun. The channel for these requests will be via the appropriate Committee (the Chief Executive can advise enquirers which Committee is the most appropriate). The Executive Committee will require to have sight of any proposals that are approved in principle by its Standing Committees – as it meets six times each year, it should be possible to provide a fairly timely response to most requests of this nature.

3.11 The Society will not approve any requests for the inclusion in its Winter or Summer Meetings programmes of any sponsored symposia or related activity. BTS remains grateful to those companies which exhibit at these Meetings and provide additional facilities such as business centres and contributions to initiatives such as the Overseas Speakers Fund, but feels the inclusion of sponsored symposia in Meetings is not appropriate. Sponsorship for the Society's short courses should normally NOT be from sole sponsors.

3.12 The Society is aware that some companies organise pre-meeting before the Summer and Winter Meetings, but participation by BTS will be limited to oversight of the proposed programme to advise if any clashes exist with the main event, and companies must not advertise or infer that the event has been planned with the assistance of the Society. Mailing lists will not be supplied to companies to invite delegates to attend such meetings.

3.13 Sole sponsorship of events (BTS short courses in particular) is not allowable. The Society prefers that such courses are not sponsored, but more than one company should be present in the event that sponsorship is deemed necessary. The advice of the Society's Chief Executive and Chair of the relevant Committee should be sought at the planning stage of such events

4. Other Matters

4.1 Mailing Lists

The Society does not sell or otherwise make available its mailing lists to external enquirers, and has only very rarely given access to (non-commercial) organisations to members' addresses. Similarly, it is not possible to include leaflets with the mailings of BTS News.

Alternative ways of circulating material are to submit, via BTS head office, information about forthcoming courses to the Editor of BTS News for inclusion in the quarterly 'What's On' page. Details of non-commercial activities can also be included on the BTS website (contact bts@brit-thoracic.org.uk) The BMJ, which publishes the journal *Thorax*, will include items in monthly mailings, at a commercial rate (contact them on 020 7387 4499).

Requests are sometimes received by research groupings, based in Universities, for access to BTS members for surveys and so on. When this occurs, the Chief Executive will refer to the Chair of the most appropriate Committee (usually the Research Committee, or the Standards of Care Committee in some cases) for comment and approval. If a mailing list is supplied, the recipient must first sign an undertaking that the data will be used once only for the stated purpose of the mailing, and not re-keyed or otherwise copied for future use.

4.2 Approved Commercial Exhibitors

The Society operates a system whereby commercial companies who wish to exhibit at Meetings must first ask to be placed on the Approved Exhibitors list. This is done by sending details of the company and its products to the Honorary Secretary c/o the Society's headquarters address. Once the details have been read and a judgment made about their suitability for exhibit, the company is placed on the list. Subsequently, invitations to exhibit at each Meeting are sent to all approved exhibitors at the same time and places are allocated on a strictly first-come/first served basis. Queries about this

process should be addressed to the Chief Executive in the first instance.

4.3 *Charity Exhibitors at Meetings*

There is currently a list of around 15 voluntary organisations and registered charities who have expressed a wish to exhibit at the Society's Meetings. Access to these Meetings is also granted on a first-come/first served basis, and numbers attending each Meeting depends on the space available. Organisations are not charged an exhibition fee, although they are asked to make a small payment towards the cost of refreshments and to observe the Society's requirements in relation to use of the space and health and safety and related regulations.

4.4 Inserts into conference bags

The Winter Meeting attracts enough delegates to make feasible the provision of a conference bag. Commercial companies are charged £1 per delegate per insert and charities are charged 10p per delegate for each separate insert, and opportunities exist for sponsorship of the bag itself.

Date of Production/Revision

March 2003

Edition 3