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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ISMPP Applauds AAMC Clarification on Ghostwriting Versus Transparent Writing Collaboration in Scientific Publications

Ewing, NJ, July 7, 2008: The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) recently approved guidelines, “Industry Funding of Medical Education” (www.aamc.org/industryfunding) not only addresses funding of medical education, but also provides guidelines to help medical schools and teaching hospitals better manage their relationships with industry. An important element of these guidelines is the clear separation of ghostwriting versus transparent writing collaboration in scientific publications.

“Unfortunately, the medical writer’s role is poorly understood by many”, said Gene Snyder, President of ISMPP. “ISMPP is working to clarify these misconceptions by defining the legitimate role of the medical writer while also supporting complete and transparent disclosure. We concur with organizations like AAMC who increase recognition and understanding of the many issues involved in the collaborative process of medical writing and publication planning”.

AAMC has appropriately defined ghostwriting “as the provision of written material that is officially credited to someone other than the writer(s) of the material. Transparent writing collaboration with attribution between academic and industry investigators, medical writers, and/or technical experts is not ghostwriting. The unacknowledged, undisclosed provision of content should not be permitted under any circumstances”. AAMC further provides the following recommendation: “Academic medical centers should prohibit physicians, trainees, and students from allowing their professional presentations of any kind, oral or written, to be ghostwritten by any party, industry or otherwise”.

“Heightened awareness and rigorous examination of academic and industry involvement with clinical publications has become an increasingly prevalent topic in the medical literature. As is often the case with media scrutiny, attribution of poor practices in one area are generalized to a larger characterization of the issue at large, albeit unjustly in many cases”, said Al Weigel, Chairman of ISMPP’s Ethics Committee. “AAMC’s guidelines provide a clear distinction between medical writing and ghostwriting/ghost authoring that is in line with the ISMPP Code of Ethics (<http://www.ismpp.org>), which is intended to promote quality clinical publication practices.”

About ISMPP

The International Society for Medical Publication Professionals is an independent nonprofit professional association with members from the pharmaceutical, medical device, and biotechnology industries; publication planning and medical communications companies; academia; and medical journal staff, including editors and publishers. Its goals are to support the education needs of publication professionals and to develop best practices that ensure the rigorous maintenance of all ethical standards for reporting the results of medical research. Additional information about ISMPP is available by contacting the organization’s Executive Director, Kimberly Goldin (phone 914-945-0507, e-mail kgoldin@ismpp.org), or online at www.ismpp.org.