

Information about membership of the Code of Practice Appeal Board

Membership

In addition to the independent Chair, there are eight independent members of the Code of Practice Appeal Board, comprised of:

- three independent registered medical practitioners appointed in consultation with the British Medical Association, one with recent experience as a general practitioner and one with recent experience as a hospital consultant treating patients,
- one independent practising registered pharmacist appointed following consultation with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society,
- one independent registered nurse prescriber appointed following consultation with the Royal College of Nursing,
- one independent member to represent the interests of patients,
- one member from an independent body which provides information on medicines, and
- one independent lay member.

Also on the Appeal Board are:

- four registered medical practitioners who are medical directors or senior executives of pharmaceutical companies, and
- four directors or senior executives from pharmaceutical companies.

One of the members from pharmaceutical companies may be retired, provided that the initial appointment is made within one year of the date of retirement.

Appeal Board members are appointed by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) Board. Independent members are appointed by the ABPI Board following consultation with the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) (Paragraph 3.1 of the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority (PMCPA) Constitution and Procedure). In addition, for certain independent members, professional organisations are consulted as noted above. (Paragraph 3.2 of the Constitution and Procedure).

Members of the Appeal Board (other than its Chair) are appointed for a term of three years and may be reappointed but they may serve for no more than two consecutive terms. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may nominate a member who has served for two terms for reappointment for a third term. A member of the Appeal Board who has served two, or following the Chair's nomination, three consecutive terms of service is eligible for reappointment after an interval of at least one year. (Paragraph 3.3).

The role of the Code of Practice Appeal Board

Initial rulings upon complaints made under the ABPI Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry are made by the Code of Practice Panel, which is comprised of at least two of the following; the Director, Deputy Director and the Managers of the PMCPA. (Paragraph 2).

Either party can appeal against the rulings of the Panel to the Code of Practice Appeal Board. The Appeal Board is the final arbiter as to whether or not there has been a breach of the ABPI Code. (Paragraph 7).

The Appeal Board also receives reports on all complaints which have been settled at Panel level, that is to say where the Panel's decisions have been accepted without appeal. (Paragraphs 4.1 and 11.1). The majority of cases are not appealed.

The Appeal Board also receives certain formal reports from the Panel or Authority. (Paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2). Other formal reports can also be made. (Paragraph 11.1).

The Appeal Board may impose additional sanctions upon a company ruled in breach of the ABPI Code including in relation to cases settled at Panel level. (Paragraphs 10 and 11).

The Appeal Board may report companies to the ABPI Board. (Paragraph 12).

The Appeal Board also advises the Authority on any matter concerning the ABPI Code or its administration when it is asked to do so. (Paragraphs 1.3 and 1.5).

The Director of the PMPCA reports to the Appeal Board for guidance on the interpretation of the Code and the operation of the complaints process. (Paragraph 1.3).

Meetings of the Code of Practice Appeal Board

The Code of Practice Appeal Board usually meets at 7th Floor, Southside, 105 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QT, where the PMCPA and the ABPI have their offices. Recently meetings have been held by video conference.

Meetings start at 10am and usually continue on into the early afternoon. Members must schedule their diaries to ensure that, if business dictates, they are available to attend for the whole day. The honorarium is paid on the basis that members will be available for the entire day.

Eleven meetings are scheduled for each calendar year, one for each month except for August. Occasionally particular meetings are cancelled because of a lack of business to consider. Two additional provisional meetings are scheduled for March/April and October in case there is more business than can be accommodated at the normal meetings.

The role of members of the Code of Practice Appeal Board

Each appeal or report which comes before the Code of Practice Appeal Board is the subject of detailed papers.

These consist of the initial complaint and the respondent company's response, the minute of the Code of Practice Panel's consideration of the complaint and the resulting correspondence. If an appeal is to be considered, the papers will also include the letter of appeal and the other party's comments on it, and, in an appeal from the complainant, further comments on the company's response to the appeal,

together with supporting evidence at each stage, such as published medical and scientific papers etc. Original copies of material will be included where appropriate.

It is essential that prior to meetings Appeal Board members read all of the correspondence and the Panel's minute and familiarize themselves with the supporting evidence. There is a substantial amount of detailed pre-reading to do in the week prior to a meeting and members must ensure they allow enough time for this.

Appeal Board members are required to declare certain interests as set out in the separate 'Declarations of Interest' document.

If, prior to a meeting, a member thinks that a potential conflict of interest is likely to result in him/her being barred from hearing an appeal or report, they should contact the Executive Officer of the PMCPA for advice so that, if necessary, alternative arrangements can be made to ensure that the Appeal Board remains quorate despite their absence.

At the meeting, the party or parties present will usually make a presentation in support of their position. A complainant not from a pharmaceutical company does not usually appear in person or seek representation at the appeal hearing, though they are fully entitled to do so. It is expected that members of the Appeal Board will ask questions of those appearing. If both parties are present then they communicate via the Chair, not directly.

When the presentations and questions are at an end and the parties have left the meeting, members of the Appeal Board debate and decide, in relation to each ruling appealed, whether or not to uphold the Panel's decision ie whether or not there has been a breach of the ABPI Code. This is done on a show of hands, the Chair having both an original and a casting vote. Members are expected to participate in the discussion.

The arrangements are similar when the Appeal Board considers a formal report made under the Constitution and Procedure from the Panel or Authority except that only the respondent company is entitled to appear. The respondent company receives a copy of the report which includes the initial complaint, the company's response, the minutes of the Panel meeting, if relevant the minutes of the Appeal Board and the resulting correspondence.

A formal report is made with a view to the Appeal Board considering whether further sanctions are appropriate. A report is not an appeal of the Panel's rulings.

At each Appeal Board meeting details of cases completed at the Code of Practice Panel level are provided to the Appeal Board to review the documents provided with a view to considering whether the case report can be published or whether additional sanctions are required. Members of the Appeal Board are expected to raise any concerns.

The particular role of independent members

When the Appeal Board considers an appeal or a formal report, independent members, including the Chair, must be in the majority. (Paragraph 4.2).

Independent members of the Appeal Board bring to its deliberations viewpoints from outside the pharmaceutical industry. The ABPI Code recognises and seeks to achieve a balance between the needs of patients, health professionals, the public and industry.

It is important that outside opinions are available to the Appeal Board because the pharmaceutical industry's products and activities are directed towards health professionals invariably and may impact

prescribing. The status of self regulation is enhanced by independent membership. The role of the independent member is a valued one.

Both independent and industry members of the Appeal Board are expected to participate fully in every meeting and bring an independent mind to the matters at hand. Industry members do not represent their companies.

Attendance

Members are expected to make every effort to attend meetings. The PMCPA Annual Report lists members of the Appeal Board and gives their attendance records for the year.

Publication of outcomes

The ABPI Code of Practice is operated transparently and the outcomes of all cases are published in detail on the PMCPA website www.pmcpa.org.uk.

Remuneration of independent members of the Code of Practice Appeal Board

In recognition of their time and effort, independent members of the Code of Practice Appeal Board are paid an annual retainer (£2,500) and an attendance fee for each meeting attended (£650). They are also reimbursed for their reasonable travel and subsistence costs.

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