Medical Staff Conflict of Interest

Administrative Policies & Procedures

General Description

Purpose: To establish a policy and procedures for addressing any conflict of interest involving the Medical Staff that could affect patient safety or quality of care, treatment and services.

Scope: Leaders and members of the Meridian Hospitals Corporation Medical Staff, including physicians and licensed independent practitioners, collectively referred to as the "Medical Staff."

Policy:

1. It is the policy of the Meridian Hospitals Corporation hospitals to promote the best interests of their patients. All decisions concerning the safe care and quality of treatment and services provided by the Medical Staff to hospital patients are made solely with the intent to meet the needs of those patients without any actual or potential conflicts of interest. Under no circumstances may members of the Medical Staff place their own financial interests above the welfare of their patients (excerpt from AMA Code of Ethics- Conflict of Interest: Guidelines).

2. In accordance with Meridian Health’s Code of Conduct: Organizational Ethics, high standards will be maintained in all practices including, but not limited to: patient care, admissions, transfer, discharge, billing, marketing, and relationships with other healthcare providers, educational institutions, vendors, and payers.

3. This Policy is intended to supplement, and not replace, the existing professional standards outlined in the Meridian Hospitals Corporation Medical and Dental Staff Bylaws and the Meridian...
Health Code of Conduct.

DEFINITIONS:

1. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: A conflict of interest may exist if a member of the Medical Staff or a member of his/her family* or an entity directed or controlled by them:
   i. has a material ownership or investment interest in any firm, person or entity doing business (or seeking to do business) with Meridian or holds a board or committee membership position in any firm or entity that is doing business with (or seeking to do business) with Meridian;
   ii. receives material compensation (e.g., gifts, grants, stipends or amenities) from any firm, person or entity doing business (or seeking to do business) or competes with Meridian;
   iii. has a material ownership or investment interest in any firm, person, or entity that competes with Meridian, or holds a board or committee membership position in any firm or entity that competes with Meridian.

2. MATERIAL INTEREST: For purposes of this Policy, an investment/ownership interest is defined as material if it:
   i. exceeds 5% of the individual’s total assets;
   ii. accounts for more than 5% of the individual’s annual income;
   or
   iii. exceeds 2% of the total investment/ownership of the other entity; or
   iv. compensation exceeds $10,000 per year.
   Notwithstanding the above, a material investment interest does not include an interest in publicly traded, diversified mutual funds or an equity interest, including stock options, in a publicly traded company so long as the interest in mutual funds or the equity interest when aggregated for the member of the Medical Staff and members of his/her family does not exceed the amounts listing in 2(i), (ii), or (iii) above.

3. MEDICAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MEC): The Medical Executive Committee of the Medical Staff.

*Family member shall mean: spouses, domestic partner, birth or adoptive parents, grandparents, children and their spouses, grandchildren and their spouses, in-laws, siblings and other relatives of yours or your spouse, by blood or marriage with whom you have regular contact and about whom you have knowledge, information or belief regarding the issues of potential conflict described in this policy.
General Guidelines/Principles:

1. If a conflict develops between the Medical Staff member’s financial interest and the Medical Staff member’s responsibilities to the patient, the conflict must be resolved to the patient’s benefit. The interests of patients must be placed above all other considerations, such as personal interests (e.g., financial incentives) or employer business interests (e.g., profit) (excerpt AMA Code of Ethics). Members of the Medical Staff have a duty to disclose to the Chairperson of the MEC, with a copy to his/her Department Chairperson, promptly, fully and in good faith all material facts regarding relationships with entities or external persons as described in the definitions section (1.) of this policy that could reasonably be perceived to create a conflict of interest which could potentially affect the safety, quality of care, treatment, and services to Meridian Health patients.

Procedure: 1. In any situation where a decision which could affect the safety, quality, treatment or services rendered to hospital patients, Medical Staff members must consider the guidelines provided in this policy regarding potential conflicts as defined in the definitions section of this policy and disclose all material facts to the Chairperson of the MEC, with a copy to his/her Department Chairperson. Examples of these situations could include, but are not limited to: advocacy for a particular medical device or pharmaceutical drugs, usage of a particular post-acute care provider. Individuals who have knowledge of such a potential conflict with regard to another member of the Medical Staff also have an obligation to provide such information to the MEC Chairperson.

2. The MEC Chairperson will consider the facts of the situation and determine whether a conflict of interest exists, and will advise the affected member of the Medical Staff of his/her determination. If the determination is that a conflict exists, the MEC Chairperson will refer the matter to the Credentialing Committee and the Quality, Improvement, and Outcomes Committee as necessary.

3. If the Medical Staff member disagrees with the determination reached by the Chairperson of the MEC, the Medical Staff member can appeal that determination to the MEC.

4. Prior to serving on any Meridian board or hospital committee, Medical Staff members must likewise disclose all material facts relevant to a potential conflict of interest as defined in this Policy to the Chairperson of the MEC with a copy to his/her Department
Chairperson.

5. In situations where a Medical Staff member serves on a committee or board and a conflict or potential conflict is determined to exist as noted above, the Medical Staff member must use his or her judgment in determining if it is appropriate to recuse himself or herself from any decision/vote involving the disclosed interest. A Committee Chair may request such recusal at his/her discretion when they believe a conflict exists. The foregoing requirements should not be construed as preventing the Medical Staff member from briefly stating his/her knowledge regarding the item under review, nor from answering pertinent questions from other Medical Staff members since his/her knowledge may be of significant assistance in said review.

6. Medical Staff members will be asked to provide an affirmative statement at a designated time, such as re-credentialing, that they have read and understand this Policy and will disclose and declare to the Chairperson of the MEC any facts that could cause a potential conflict of interest as defined in this policy.

7. In accordance with The Joint Commission requirements, this policy will be available on request to hospital patients and members of the Medical Staff.

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Special Notes / Appendix

References:
Meridian Hospitals Corporation Medical and Dental Staff Bylaws
Joint Commission Leadership Standards: LD 02.02.01 and LD 04.02.01
Meridian Code of Conduct
Policy: Corporate Compliance Program - Organizational Code of Business Ethics, MHS-ADMIN-01-1006

Approvals:
Medical Council: November 16, 2009
Meridian Hospitals Corporation Board of Trustees: November 24, 2009