

## INDUSTRY VIEWS

How RAI Amsterdam ensures a warm welcome for medical conferences



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# Medical meeting marvel

A big issue for medical congress organisers today is the need to comply with local rules in every country, writes **Maurits van der Sluis**.

**W**hen it comes to Europe, rules tend to apply on an EU-wide level. In particular, regulations for the advertising of medications can affect the organisation of a conference. In Amsterdam, we have set up a partnership to provide advance independent tailor-made advice to organisers about the possibilities. This will help them begin their conference safe in the knowledge that they are in compliance with all regulations.

Although they are embedded in national legislation, the regulations regarding medications for human use are the same throughout Europe. In addition, the European umbrella organisation for self-regulation, EFPIA, has drawn up an international code of conduct. In the Netherlands, these components are combined in the Dutch Code of Conduct for Pharmaceutical Advertising (Gedragscode Geneesmiddelenreclame or CGR). For organisers of medical conferences, one section of the CGR is particularly relevant: prescription medications may only be advertised to professionals – that is, people who prescribe or deliver drugs, such as physicians and pharmacists. Fortunately, it is actually quite easy to keep track of this, with a bit of help.

### INDEPENDENT ADVICE

In Amsterdam, the municipality, NBCT Holland Marketing (the entity responsible for branding and marketing in the Netherlands), RAI Amsterdam, the Ministry of Health and the Keuringsraad work closely together to ensure that the organisation of each medical conference proceeds smoothly. The Keuringsraad plays a key role in this regard, as it oversees compliance with the CGR and advises conference organisers about this topic. We bring organisers of medical conferences in touch with the right person at the Keuringsraad at the start of the preparations. The organisers can then explain their plans and are given advice on what is and is not permitted, and what the possible alternatives are.

In many cases, it is necessary to register the profession of the visitors and ensure that it is clearly visible on their badges. This opens up several alternatives in terms of layout. A part of the show floor could only be accessible to certain professionals, for instance. Another option is that

exhibitors only be allowed to recommend drugs in one-on-one contact with professionals. With major events that are focused primarily on professionals from abroad and not patients, the conclusion can even be that organisers need take no extra action as the majority of visitors fall within the category of prescribing professionals – badges are always handy, of course. The Keuringsraad can give a definite answer on this.

### SHORT LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Other components to keep in mind are the content of the presentations, the hospitality offered and gifts. The general guideline is that pharmaceutical companies cannot be allowed to improperly influence professionals. The Keuringsraad can provide information on this subject as well. The organisers will receive advice from the Keuringsraad in a clear letter.

We can also invite the Keuringsraad to send representatives if the organisers visit RAI Amsterdam in advance with the most important delegates, allowing them to ask questions. Finally, the Keuringsraad can be consulted via telephone during specific times.

### SIMPLE PRACTICE

While the rules may seem complex, the practice is simple. You do not need to have studied law: simply explain the concept of your conference and you will receive a personal opinion based on this. In the case of large-scale international conferences for medical professionals, you may not even have to take any measures at all; in other cases, careful organisation of the conference can ensure that you comply with all the rules. RAI Amsterdam will be pleased to put you in touch with the right people. This lets you start your conference with confidence and frees up your time to enjoy all the other fine things Amsterdam has to offer.

RAI Amsterdam is a long-standing member of the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC). 

*For further information, please contact [marianne.de.raay@aipc.org](mailto:marianne.de.raay@aipc.org) or visit [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org).*

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