



User-Friendly Policy Guide

Managing Interactions between Physicians and Industry at Academic Medical Centers: A Summary of Best Policy Practices

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These recommendations come out of an ongoing study by Columbia University's Center on Medicine as a Profession. The researchers will update their recommendations regularly to incorporate new policies and findings. These materials were made possible by a grant from the state Attorney General Consumer and Prescriber Education Grant Program, which is funded by the multi-state settlement of consumer fraud claims regarding the marketing of the prescription drug Neurontin.

Introduction

Appropriate collaboration between physicians at Academic Medical Centers (AMCs) and the pharmaceutical and medical device industries is necessary for the advancement of medicine; however, such interactions can also create conflicts of interest that threaten the quality of patient care. When a physician has a personal or financial stake in a company that produces drugs or devices used in clinical care, the interests of the physician may conflict with the interests of the patient.

Conflicts of interest in clinical care jeopardize the integrity of physicians and compromise the practice of evidence-based medicine. Even in instances in which no actual conflict exists, the appearance of such a conflict can undermine the credibility of the clinician and the associated institution. Medicine should be practiced in accordance with the best available evidence. Academic Medical Centers must take measures to eliminate bias and to protect patients by ensuring that relationships between clinicians and industry are suitable and transparent.

Columbia University's Center on Medicine as a Profession has developed the following best practices recommendations as part of an ongoing study of conflict of interest policies at AMCs.

Gifts and Meals

- ➔ Gifts from industry should be prohibited, regardless of their nature or value. Industry-sponsored meals should not be permitted on campus.

Vendor Access

- ➔ AMCs should require training, registration, and appointments for all vendors visiting campus. Vendors should wear visible identification, and should be prohibited from areas in which patient care takes place.

Samples

- ➔ Samples should only be accepted, managed, and distributed by a pharmacy or other central repository. Individuals should not be permitted to accept samples directly.

Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committees

- ➔ Individuals involved in purchasing decisions should fully disclose all industry relationships or other potential conflicts of interest. Conflicted individuals must not be permitted to serve on a P&T committee, to contribute to purchasing decisions, or to take part in pertinent discussions.

Continuing Medical Education

- ➔ CME activities should be conducted in accordance with the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) Standards for Commercial Support. Industry funding for CME should be accepted and managed via a central repository. All grants must be unqualified, and the AMC must have sole discretion for distributing funds.

Consulting and Honoraria

- ➔ Prior approval should be required for all consulting arrangements and for the acceptance of honoraria. All outside professional activities should be governed by written agreements. Payments from industry should be publicly disclosed, and they should not exceed fair market value.

Travel and Scholarships

- ➔ Funds for travel and scholarships should only be accepted and managed via a central repository. Individuals, departments, divisions and programs must be prohibited from accepting grants directly. Grants should not be earmarked for specific individuals or departments.

Ghostwriting

- ➔ Ghostwriting should be completely prohibited.

Speakers' Bureaus

- ➔ Faculty members should be prohibited from participating in industry-sponsored speaking events for which marketing is the primary purpose. Participation in industry-sponsored speaking events should require prior approval. Faculty members must maintain control over the content of speeches and presentations. They must prepare content without input from, or prior review by, the industry sponsor.