IS A GIFT EVER JUST A GIFT?

Ethical issues of prescribing & remaining abreast of pharmaceutical developments

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Agenda

- Ethical Marketing & the Marketing Code of Practice
- Influences of industry
- Prescribing under the influence
- Compliance – whose responsibility?
- The cusp of change
Pharmaceutical Advertising Down But Definitely Not Out
Marketing Ethics

Responsibility

Respect patient rights

Honest & Fair

“Right thing”

PRINCIPLES
Special ethics risks in marketing health products

- **Vulnerability** of the target market – safeguard the interests especially elderly & young
- **Knowledge gap** between marketer & client – technical information
- **Ability to manipulate information**
  - What is said
  - What is not said

Dr H Gani, Exec Officer, Sept 2015
Business Actions Toward Socially Responsible Marketing

- Corporate marketing **ethics policies**
  - Distributor relations, advertising standards, customer service, pricing, product development and general ethical standards.

- **Guiding principle** in policy determination
  - Free market and legal system

- **International ethical policies and Codes of Practice**
"They want us to set up a self regulating body."
Code and Guidelines Updated (3rd edition)

- Part A: Marketing & promotion of health products to healthcare professionals
- Part B: Marketing & promotion of health products to consumers
- Part C: Medical Devices & Diagnostics
- Part D: Code Enforcement

World - first to have generics, innovative medicines combined with veterinary, OTC medicines, medical devices and laboratory diagnostics
Why does the healthcare industry need to promote medicines to HCPs?

- The industry has a legitimate right to promote medicines to health professionals to ensure that they are up-to-date on the latest treatments available for patients. The availability of accurate, up-to-date information is vital to the appropriate use of medicines.

- There must be a balance between the needs of patients, health professionals and the public, bearing in mind the political and social environment within which the industry operates and the statutory controls governing medicines.
The Healthcare Representative role

- A pharmaceutical sales representative is a key factor within the sales of all drugs.

- They are responsible to ensure the healthcare profession is informed of the benefits of the drug along with the safety and the side effects to assist a healthcare profession as the correct information and choices to prescribe medication.

- The term used is ethical promotion, which can be described as communication of ethical values to promote their product to the physician (Wright & Lundstrom, 2004).
HC Representatives do influence physician behaviour

- Assess the impact of pharmaceutical representatives on prescribing behaviour for a new fixed dose combination inhaled corticosteroid and long-acting β2-agonist (LABA) in Denmark
- Greater increase in the market share of the promoted fixed dose combination in those practices that received a visit in comparison to those that did not receive a visit
- It did not show an increase in the proportion of patients with asthma receiving inhaled steroids.
- So what about disease awareness and appropriate prescribing?

Søndergaard et al.
Sales Representatives do influence physician behaviour & add value

At a time when many doctors are barring access to pharma reps, an August TNS Healthcare survey of 286 physicians:

- 40% of doctors surveyed see an improvement in pharma sales interactions
- Improvement was seen in web-based physician education and outreach
- 60% of physicians surveyed said that pharma-sponsored physician education was useful to them
- Only 30% found corporate reputation to be critical, although those who found it important said it was one of the most important factors.
Direct & Indirect sponsorship

DIRECT SPONSORSHIP

INDIRECT SPONSORSHIP
HCPs’ perspective

- HCPs have a negative perception of industry yet they readily partake in interactions and are influenced by them.

- All expense paid trip - 20 HCPs interviewed, non felt they would be influenced, yet prescriptions of sponsored Rx significantly increased.

- 538 studies: “Attending sponsored CME events and accepting funding for travel or lodging for educational symposia were associated with increased prescription rates of the sponsor’s medication.

- Attending presentations given by pharmaceutical representative speakers was also associated with nonrational prescribing.”

- Physician requests to add the company’s drug to hospital formularies increased by >300% especially when honoraria are received.

Interactions between physicians and the pharmaceutical industry – what does the literature say, Joe Lexchin, Can Med Assoc Journal 1993, 149 (10)

- Physicians and the pharmaceutical industry: is a gift ever just a gift?, Wazana A
HCPs’ perspective

- A postal questionnaire - 622 hospital doctors and 515 general practitioners (GPs) working in Edinburgh
- 50% industry funded
- 30% would not have attended unless funded
- <20% of the doctors were self-funded
- 86% thought that it did not create a bias in their own drug selection
- Hospital doctors and GPs had similar views on conflict of interest and bias

Do doctors rely on pharmaceutical industry funding to attend conferences and do they perceive that this creates a bias in their drug selection? Results from a questionnaire survey.

Rutledge P¹, Crookes D, McKinstry B, Maxwell SR

Speaker’s bureau

- Not unusual for drug company to nominate a speaker/s
- Ultimately the congress committee approves the speaker – independence of medical education is not compromised
- Another form of bias
Prescribing under the influence?

- Not a truth universally acknowledged
- Wealth of anecdotal evidence - paucity of studies

- Do drug samples influence resident prescribing behavior? A randomized trial American Journal of Medicine, The Vol. 118, Issue 8, Pages 881-884

- Scientific versus commercial sources of influence on the prescribing behavior of physicians American Journal of Medicine, The Vol. 73, Issue 1, Pages 4-8

Can the subconscious obligation for reciprocation that exists when gifts are offered and accepted be fully negated?
Research in social science demonstrates that the recipient of a gift feels a sense of obligation that is often subconscious

- Even when funding is unrestricted, the content favours the sponsor’s product
- Few dispute that the bias introduced by industry involvement in CME affects physician prescribing

CPMCID: PMC4131951, Industry involvement in continuing medical education, Time to say no, an Fam Physician. 2014 Aug; 60(8): 694–696, Sheryl Spithoff
Interactions with HCPs

Compliance – whose responsibility is it?
Declaration of HCP independence

- Unique role to bridge diverse worlds*
- Rational and appropriate prescription – best interest of the patient
- Critical thinking to analyse the source and content of information
- Patient-centric approach
- Moral compass
Sources to sharpen HCPs skills

- Ethical education - Online resources, certification by professional bodies, conferences, academic meetings
- Representative academic detailing vs. sales vs. e-detailing
- Medical Science Liaisons
- Awareness of the Code, company policies, international codes & regulations
- Professional Bodies’ Code of Conduct & relevant laws
MY PRESCRIPTION MEDS CAUSE DROWSINESS.

SO I GOT A SECOND PRESCRIPTION THAT CAUSES PHANTOM-HAND SYNDROME TO SLAP ME AT RANDOM INTERVALS.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD USE A DOCTOR WHO HAS LESS-EFFECTIVE PHARMACEUTICAL REPS IN HIS TERRITORY.

FIST!
The cusp of change

- Look the Trojan horse on the eye – is **conflict of interest in the patients’ best interest?**
- **Global move towards transparency**
- Developing country context:
  - Role of Pharma in CME and **funding of educational activities**
  - **Role of complementary /alternative medicines and impact on policy changes**
  - Impact on **Codes in Africa**
  - **Resourcing of regulators**
  - **Evolution of market**, including healthcare professionals, in terms of transparency

- **More independent education or greater transparency**

- Additionally and of equal importance, stricter self-regulation measures for indirect sponsorship