Physicians and Pharmaceutical Companies-Breaking the Bond
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Abstract

Pharmaceutical companies are known for providing marketing materials to medical professionals with the intent of promoting their products. Many physicians maintain relationships with pharmaceutical companies either by owning stock, delivering lectures, or participating in pharmaceutical research. When these same physicians participate in CME programs to educate their peers, these relationships can be seen as a commercial bias. Is it marketing or is it medical education? Does this information improve the health of patients, or does it line the pockets of the promoters? In 2009, PhRMA voluntarily set restrictions on providing marketing materials and programs to physicians and other providers. PhRMA will also enforce rules separating marketing from education and CME programs.

Congress has concerns about the relationship between manufacturers and providers of care. The Physician Payment Sunshine Act/S. 301 would “provide for transparency in the relationship between physicians and manufacturers of drugs, devices, biologicals, or medical supplies.” The Independent Drug Education and Outreach Act of 2009/H.R. 1859/S. 767 would provide grants or contracts for prescription drug education and outreach for healthcare providers and their patients.

The Physician Payment Sunshine Act Independent Drug Education and Outreach Act of 2009 would not ameliorate the problem. The Sunshine Act could discourage physicians from participating in CME activities and would saddle physicians with an inordinate amount of paperwork. Research conducted by the government is likely to be motivated by price and short term health consequences. Innovation would be controlled by political pressures rather than the spirit of entrepreneurship and capitalism.