

The Prudent Prescriber

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Does Big Pharma Affect Docs' Prescribing Habits?

Pharm Reps ≠ Rational Prescribing

(PR)



(RP)



* Ghostwriters on the Sly

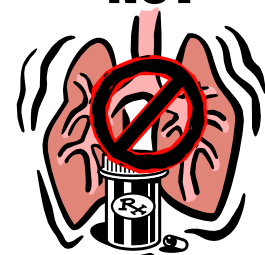
Wyeth is under investigation by Senator Charles Grassley (Republican, Iowa), a member of the Senate Finance Committee, which is currently looking into drug industry influence on doctors. Wyeth and DesignWrite, a medical writing firm, have been asked to disclose payments related to the preparation of journal articles. The New York Times (December 12, 2008) reported "documents show company executives came up with the ideas for medical journal articles, titled them, drafted outlines, paid writers to draft the manuscripts, recruited academic authors and identified publications to run the articles -- all without disclosing the companies' roles to journal editors or readers." The congressional investigations have centered on Wyeth's Women's Healthcare Business unit which promotes hormone replacement drugs Premarin and Prempro. Prempro sales took a huge hit after the Women's Health Initiative linked it to breast cancer.

* Samples Send Scripts \$\$\$Soaring

- \$ In an AHRQ sponsored study, Caleb Alexander et al. studied the out-of-pocket prescription drug costs of 5709 patients who received 2343 samples and those who never received drug samples.
- \$ The out-of-pocket costs for six months:
 - Never received drug samples: \$178
 - Received drug samples: \$244 (during period of sample receipt)
 - Received drug samples: \$212 (following period of sample receipt)
- \$ Patients who receive prescription drug samples were less likely to continue on the same medication than those who received the prescription drug from the pharmacy (19% versus 45%).
- \$ The researchers concluded that although free prescription drug samples may provide some patients with valuable short-term economic relief, an economic burden persists for patients both during and following periods of sample receipt.

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Antibiotics do NOT



help
acute bronchitis

β-blockers in post-MI save lives

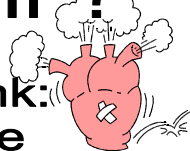


Pill splitters save big

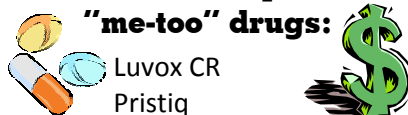


CHF?

Think:
Ace
Aldactone
B-blocker
Dig
Diuretic



Avoid these expensive "me-too" drugs:



Luvox CR
Pristiq
Omnaris
Soma 250
AMrix XR
Xyzal
Veramyst
Ambien CR

Treat diabetics BP to 130/80



now available
on the
Generic Marquee

Razadyne → galantamine
Sonata → zaleplon
Fosamax → alendronate
Norvasc → amlodipine
Ambien → zolpidem
Flonase → fluticasone nasal

Does Big Pharma Affect Docs' Prescribing Habits? (continued)

✳ Goodbye Goodies

Starting January 1, 2009, the pharmaceutical industry has agreed to a voluntary moratorium on branded freebies:

clockspadsmugsssoapdispenserstshirtstongue depressorsstethoscopetagslightskleenexstaplers flashdrivespaperweightscalculatorskeychains scissorsstressballspillcontainerslazerpointers bagsgogglesreflexhammerscalipersclipboards pocketprotectors.....

and lots and lots of **PENS!**



Dr. Jeffrey Caren, LA cardiologist, and his pillar of 1200 drug company pens

(Photo by J. Emilio Flores for the NY Times)

My Take - pharma's influence on physician's prescription writing behaviors:

- ◆ In spite of ongoing physician protests to the contrary, there is abundant evidence (www.nofreelunch.org) that pharmaceutical company spun studies, pens and drug samples do change physician prescription writing behaviors.
- ◆ Manipulating the scientific literature to mislead physicians' prescribing practices is unconscionable. "No one should approach the temple of science with the soul of a moneychanger." – Thomas Browne
- ◆ In a less sophisticated study done in Mesa County eight years ago, we showed a direct correlation between the number of drug rep visits to primary care docs and the docs' overall drug costs per patient. The relationship was linear and was even more pronounced for number of drug samples received by the physician and his per patient drug costs.



Sir William Osler on Big Pharma:

- ☞ "I would protest against the usurpation on the part of these men (purveyors of pharmaceuticals) of our function as teachers." 1909
- ☞ "Far too large a section of the treatment of disease is today controlled by the big manufacturing pharmacists, who have enslaved us in a plausible pseudoscience." 1909



One Liners

- ☞ In RCTs of primary and secondary prevention, vitamins A and E, and beta-carotene supplementation increased mortality. Vitamin C and selenium supplementation had no significant effect on mortality. ([Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews](#))
- ☞ Although influenza activity in Colorado has been low, preliminary data indicate that the prevalence of influenza A (H1N1) **virus strains resistant** to the antiviral medication oseltamivir (Tamiflu, \$93 for 10 capsules, flat-priced) **is high**. When influenza A virus infection or exposure is suspected, zanamivir (Relenza, \$64, 1 inhaler, 20 doses) or a combination of oseltamivir and rimantadine (Flumadine) are more appropriate options than oseltamivir alone.
- ☞ The American Diabetes Association has dropped its recommendation for Avandia (possible cardiac risks) and recommends a back to basics two tier approach to type 2 diabetics:
 - Tier 1** lifestyle changes, metformin, sulfonylureas and insulin.
 - Tier 2** Actos and Byetta (less HbA1c lowering and cost more than 1st Tier).

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