

The Cancer in Medicine

Donald M. Petersen Jr., BS, HCD(hc), FICC(h), Publisher

Over the past few weeks, three more reports have surfaced that further reveal the "cancer" that is slowing taking its toll on medicine:

- Drug Company "Experts" Have Infiltrated the FDA - According to a September 25, 2000 report published by *USA Today* (<http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/drugs/lhdru145.htm>), 54% of the "experts hired to advise the Food and Drug Administration on which medicines should be approved for sale" have "direct financial interests in the drug or topic they are asked to evaluate."
- Pharmaceutical-Industry-Sponsorship Can Bias Randomized Controlled Trials - A study published in *The Lancet*¹ stated: "Reporting of pharmaceutical-industry-sponsored randomized clinical trials often result in biased findings, either due to selective reporting of studies with non-equivalent aims or publication of low-quality papers." The study further found an "increased proportion of successful interventions among commercially funded randomized controlled trials more likely means that preferential support was given to trials that had a greater chance of favoring one intervention over another."
- Frequent Deception by Drug Research Participants - A study in *Chest*² concludes: "Deception among noncompliers (those participants who don't take their drugs as required by the study being conducted) occurs frequently in clinical trials, is often not revealed by the usual methods of monitoring, and cannot be predicted by data readily available in clinical trials."

What does this tell us about the influence of the drug industry on the regulatory and scientific side of "medicine"? The answer appears rather obvious, but should be stated for the record:

The drug companies have an apparently uncontested influence on the studies that are published regarding their products, and are obviously influencing over half of the people trusted by the FDA to approve the drugs they are selling.

Furthermore, even without drug-company influence, clinical trials on prescription drugs have serious problems that even they apparently don't know about - problems that may reduce the reported frequency of side effects. According to the *Chest* study:

The participants of drug research studies frequently don't take the drugs according to the requirements of those studies; this is often completely unnoticed by the investigators; and there is probably no way to know how much of this has happened in most studies.

We're left with a rather uncomfortable scenario: The drugs being taken by the American public are tested in biased studies which include people who don't take the drugs as required, and these drugs are then approved by people with financial interests, working for a federal agency that apparently

condones or accepts their conflicts of interest.

Take into account also that the drug companies spend "\$8,000 to \$13,000 per year on each physician"³ in an effort to influence their prescribing habits. So now we have financially encouraged MDs relying on biased research (with participants that may not have even taken the drug) when prescribing drugs and trusting FDA approval by people financially tied to the drug companies.

Given the current status of pharmaceutical control, it isn't hard to understand why drugs are so risky and should be considered a last recourse, if considered at all. It is no wonder that many in the U.S. and around the world are losing trust in the drug manufacturers and turning toward chiropractic and other forms of alternative care.

And while the temptation may be, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," it should be obvious that this pharmaceutical house of cards can only lead to more mistrust by the public and a greater desire to seek the benefits of chiropractic and a "wellness" lifestyle.

The best thing to do: stand for what you are - a beacon of light cutting through the fog of pharmaceutical greed and deception.

References:

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2. Simmons MS, Nides MA, Rand CS, Wise RA, Tashkin DP. Unpredictability of deception in compliance with physician-prescribed bronchodilator inhaler use in a clinical trial. *Chest* 2000; 118: 290-295.
3. Wazana A. Physicians and the pharmaceutical industry. *JAMA* 2000;283:373-380.

DMP Jr.
don@dcmedia.com

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