

## OPINIONS

## New industry guidelines

In the July/August issue of PharmaVOICE, we asked if state legislatures have gone too far in their recommendation to require pharmaceutical companies to disclose any gift or payment of \$25 or more to doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacists, or health insurers for the purpose of marketing their products.

## A "Free Economy?"

I, for one, am getting sick and tired of the Federal Government interfering with what we used to refer to as the "Free Economy." Capitalism doesn't work if there is interference from outside organizations. When there are rules placed on competitors in a free economy, benefiting some or hobbling others, the system quits working.

Pharmaceutical companies play a major, if not the leading, role in the improvement of quality of life. The life span of the average American has increased dramatically with the introduction of new medications. Other healthcare costs have been greatly reduced as well. Yet the government continues to put on blinders never seeing anything but what's ahead of them and that, in most cases, is the next election. It's this willingness to change anything and everything to try to please select groups of the voting public that continues to drive this process. This voting group, (a very powerful one at that!), only sees medications as high priced, not life saving or extending, mostly based on their out-of-date perspective on what things really cost. The good old boys in Washington are ready to take up the charge against the big, mean, greedy pharmaceutical companies. By not taking time to realize what the entire picture looks like or what the outcome might be, they want to "slay" the big bad pharma companies, only to do more damage than good.

What would the answer be if you asked any one of the seniors complaining about the high cost of medications, which medications should we stop investing in so we can cut the prices as they wish? The cancer cures for tomorrow? The heart disease cures? How about the cures for the breathing disorders that kill thousands of people a year? Oh, I see you don't want anything to change along those lines, new cures for disease, you just don't want to pay for them? Well who is going to pay for these new medications? Certainly not Peter Jennings nor the government.

I get calls on a regular basis from people who are 70, 80, 90, and even 100 years old complaining about the cost of one of our drugs. When I explain to them why the drug costs as much as it does they still continue to complain saying the research was paid for years ago. I try to explain to them that their dollars are going to

research for future cures, cures for their children and grandchildren. They also explain that someone footed the bill for the development of the product the one protecting them possibly their grandchild. Their answers are almost always the same: "I'm not interested in paying for someone else's cure;" "I don't have grandchildren or children so the hell with paying for someone's future cure;" or my favorite one yet, "I don't care about what future cures you are working on. I just can't afford the drug anymore. Cigarettes have hit \$3.50 a pack and I can't afford both."

This self-loving voting group, who wears the biggest blinders, is directing and controlling a bunch of vote hungry, blinder-wearing, politicians! No wonder we are headed in the direction we are! Today it's the pharmaceutical companies, tomorrow, who knows? Whoever or whatever industry is making a fair profit (in a "Capitalistic Society?") will be targeted. This is the oldest problem in the world, the haves and have nots. After all, if companies aren't allowed to make a profit in a "Capitalistic Society" with a "Free Market Economy," it wouldn't be the American Way!

The comments above are strictly my own and don't represent those of the company I work for.

*Terry E. Franzel*

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## Public Scrutiny

First, while I understand the public concern in light of the negative press that the pharmaceutical industry has received over the past few months, I disagree with the level of scrutiny being imposed by some states on the entire industry. If we are going to do this for the pharmaceutical industry, then let's also do it for car dealers (who receive freebies from the car manufacturers) and beer distributors, etc. Almost any industry you can think of provides its customers with free items, and, sometimes, pays them to be consultants or advisors.

If such measures are placed into effect for the pharmaceutical industry, the minimum amount should be increased to above \$100, which will cover a majority of the smaller items representatives often distribute to physicians offices,



including pens, pads, and other small give-away items. This amount also will cover lunch, which is often provided by sales reps in return for time during which presentations can be given.

Last, but not least, consultants and advisory roles should be excluded from this rule. The fact that a given doctor is a consultant for a given pharmaceutical company should not be public knowledge except for when that given doctor is published or presenting data (i.e. thereby properly disclosing financial relationships).

*Nauman Shah*

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## A Disturbing Trend

The recent attempts by our legislators to further regulate the pharmaceutical industry are disturbing. How can we tell the pharma industry that advertising expenses are not state tax deductible? Are these expenses not part of overall "operating expenses?" Where do patients and doctors learn about new and leading-edge treatment options?

My other concern is with gifts/entertainment for doctors from pharma companies. Do our legislators not understand that we need to educate doctors on the newest drugs for their patients and potential drug-to-drug interactions, dosing, and clinical outcomes? When can we do that? Not when the waiting room is full of patients. We need to get the doctor out of the office where we can discuss many complicated medical issues. We don't have the opportunity, or facilities, in the field to invite healthcare providers to our office for detailed discussions. We need to blend work with some relaxation.

The pharmaceutical industry has, and will, continue to reduce patient costs through better medication and extended quality of life.

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