



NEWS RELEASE

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PRESCRIPTION PROJECT-NATIONAL PHYSICIANS ALLIANCE JOIN FORCES TO STEM NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF DRUG INDUSTRY MARKETING ON HEALTH CARE

BOSTON – The Prescription Project and the National Physicians Alliance (NPA) today announced a partnership to engage physicians in a nationwide campaign to eliminate the harmful influence of pharmaceutical marketing on the cost, quality, and safety of health care.

Last spring, the Prescription Project and the NPA began a collaboration around their united opposition to prescription data mining—the sale of physician prescribing data for use in pharmaceutical marketing. Building on those efforts, the two organizations will work in partnership to develop a national physician network to educate doctors about how pharmaceutical marketing to physicians creates conflicts of interest in the profession; generate support among physicians for reforms that limit industry influence on medical practice; and promote evidence-based prescribing. The NPA will also develop professional ethical guidelines for physician-industry relationships and provide practical advice on cutting ties to the industry.

“As the prime targets of a well-funded drug industry marketing machine, physicians must play a leadership role in promoting medical care that is guided by independent, evidence-based science, not by propaganda,” said Rob Restuccia, executive director of the Prescription Project. “Given the NPA’s firm stance against the influence of pharmaceutical dollars on the profession and its strong organizational capabilities, it will be a very powerful, effective voice driving reform from within the profession.”

The pharmaceutical industry spends more than \$7 billion per year in direct-to-physician marketing that includes free gifts, meals, travel, speaking fees and other inducements—all to persuade physicians to prescribe new, expensive, largely unproven brand-name drugs that lack a significant record of safety. As recently reported in the New York Times, pre-marketing clinical trials have lacked adequate oversight and the dangers of new drugs are often revealed during their first few years on the market.

An April 2007 survey published in *New England Journal of Medicine* found that 94 percent of physicians reported some type of relationship with industry, with 83 percent reporting they accept free food and drinks from drug company representatives. The prescribing of brand-name drugs over equivalent generics results in an estimated \$8.8 billion in excess expenditures per year in the United States.

"Pharmaceutical marketing has infiltrated every level of medical education, publishing, research, and practice," said NPA executive director Dr. Jean Silver-Isenstadt. "Physicians want to prescribe what is best for patients, and want data they can trust. Today, ads look like articles, educational lectures are industry-funded, and patients must practically compete with drug reps for seats in office waiting rooms. The safety of patients, the cost of health care, and the independence of our profession are all at stake here, and physicians are ready to push back."

Other components of the Prescription Project-NPA partnership include development of:

- an online toolkit to provide physicians with industry-free resources, such as information sheets for patients about why the office is refusing to display pharmaceutical marketing materials, advice on how to change practice habits and replace pharmaceutical-branded items, and evidence-based prescribing resources such as *CR Best Buy Drugs* and *The Medical Letter*
- an "Industry-Free Speakers Bureau" of NPA members who have no financial conflicts of interest and who will give presentations on pharmaceutical policy reform at medical institutions, professional meetings, and to the general public; and
- a database of physician stories that document industry-influence experiences to be shared with legislators and the public to bolster arguments for reform.

About The Prescription Project

The Prescription Project is led by Community Catalyst in partnership with the Institute on Medicine as a Profession. Created with The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Project promotes evidence-based prescribing and seeks to eliminate conflicts of interest in medicine caused by pharmaceutical marketing to physicians by working with academic medical centers, professional medical societies, public and private payers, and state and federal policymakers. For more information, please visit www.prescriptionproject.org.

About the National Physicians Alliance

United across medical specialties, the National Physicians Alliance was founded to restore physicians' primary emphasis on the core values of the medical profession: service, integrity, and advocacy. The NPA works to improve health and well being, and to ensure equitable, affordable, high quality health care for all people. For more information, please visit www.npalliance.org.

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