



Support – “The Physician Payments Sunshine Act”

Trust, an essential part of the doctor-patient relationship, is under assault by intrusive marketing practices of the pharmaceutical industry. Newspapers are filled with stories of marketers attempting to influence physicians with payments and gifts. “Sunshine laws” requiring the disclosure of these payments would illuminate this practice, providing information about physicians’ conflicts of interest, and strengthening public pressure to reduce them.

All gifts, even those of nominal value, influence medical decision-making

- A report in the Journal of the American Medical Association reviewing nearly 30 studies concluded that gifts unquestionably influence clinical decisions.¹
- Doctors who accept payments or gifts from a company are more inclined toward that company’s products.
- Even small gifts (e.g. pens, trinkets) have been shown to influence decision-making.²

Voluntary guidelines from the pharmaceutical industry (PhRMA) and the AMA have failed to curb influence

- A recent survey in the New England Journal of Medicine reported that 94% of physicians accept payments or gifts from the pharmaceutical industry.³ This was conducted after enactment of these voluntary guidelines.
- Industry and AMA guidelines still permit gifts that influence clinical practice; the guidelines perpetuate the myth that doctors (unlike other people) can resist the unconscious influence of gifts.

Sunshine laws are a key step toward rolling back pervasive marketing influences in medical practice

- Currently, the public has no access to information on pharmaceutical industry payments to individual physicians and therefore little means to identify physician conflicts of interest.
- Elected representatives have not been able to effectively address the problem because payments are secret. Disclosure laws would help the government identify conflicts of interest related to public programs such as Medicare prescription drug spending that result from current marketing practices.
- Sunshine laws that identify individual physicians and pharmaceutical companies will help sustain public pressure on doctors to reject all gifts from industry.

The National Physicians Alliance supports “Sunshine Laws” that would shine a bright light on gifts and payments from industry to doctors – gifts of any value should be reported and easily accessible to the public

- The NPA supports The Physician Payments Sunshine Act and strongly encourages its passage.
- The NPA believes the law should require the disclosure of *all* gifts (currently the bill exempts payments to the recipient until the collective annual total per company reaches \$100).
- The NPA believes the information should be easily accessible to the public and searchable by individual physicians (as the bill currently specifies).

The National Physicians Alliance is founded to restore physicians' primary emphasis on the core values of our profession: service, integrity, and advocacy. The NPA offers a professional home for physicians seeking creative collaboration and mutual support. As a diverse physician community, we work to improve health and well being, and to ensure equitable, affordable, high quality health care for all people.

¹ Wazana, A. Physicians and the pharmaceutical industry: Is a gift ever just a gift? JAMA. 2000; 283: 373-380.

² Dana, J., Loewenstein, G. A social science perspective on gifts to physicians from industry. JAMA. 2003; 290: 252-255.

³ Campbell EG, Gruen RL, Mountford J, Miller LG, Cleary PD, Blumenthal D. A national survey of physician-industry relationships. N Engl J Med. 2007; 356: 1742-1750.