

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Drug Company Corruption You Won’t Believe”

Pharmaceutical companies have egregiously participated in one hundred years of sleazy practices and continue to do so. They withhold unfavorable data (negative studies) on profitable drugs and fail to file timely reports on safety and effectiveness, sometimes for years. Avandia, Celebrex, Zyprexa and Vioxx come to mind. They hire "investigators" and consultants to produce questionable favorable studies and have them published in journals to legitimize their exalted and mellifluous claims. But, according to a 2013 article in the Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics (JLME), here is the heart of the problem: about 350 people die daily from drug reactions or 128,000 per year. A huge collection of studies and lawsuits already documents strategies by which pharmaceutical companies hide, ignore, or misrepresent evidence about new drugs; distort the medical literature; and misrepresent products to prescribing physicians. There appears to be an epidemic of harmful allowable FDA approved drugs, which have scarce benefits to any patients. Massive lobbying programs and political contributions perpetuate the corruption and abuse of patients. Drug company pressure has resulted in under-funding of FDA enforcement capabilities, which lets drug companies continue their unscrupulous practices. And, the recommendations and prescribing habits of trusted physicians has been tainted by strong unethical drug company influences. Medical science is being manipulated to deviate from the principles of helping reduce suffering and pain, treatment of illness and prevention of health risks, by the powerful and wealthy pharmaceutical industry. I have said, "The pharmaceutical companies rule with a gold-plated iron fist," since they control drug-related legislation on national and state levels. Always keep in mind that the drug companies primary goal is "to provide investors with a superior rate of return," even though their advertised goal is to provide products to save and improve lives. The JLME article stated, "Pharmaceutical companies continuously emphasize how deeply society depends on their development of innovative products to improve health. But in fact, these companies are mostly developing drugs that are mostly little better than existing products but have the potential to cause widespread adverse reactions even when appropriately prescribed." Reportedly, the industry has a hidden business model to maximize profits on scores of drugs with clinically minor additional benefits. The FDA was founded to protect the public's health from the fraudulent cures peddled in the 19th century but it has proven to be impotent in both monitoring safety and enforcement of existing laws against offenders. This devious scenario is just as it was designed by Big Pharma.

In the America that I love, drug company corruption results annually in up to 2.7 million hospitalized Americans with serious adverse drug reactions. Drug safety and testing are paramount. The public must be protected from rampant drug company corruption.

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