



Coalition for Healthcare Communication

New Report: Doctors, Patients Benefit Greatly from Commercially Supported Medical Education

Primary beneficiaries of industry-supported efforts include minorities, poor

New York, NY (April 27) -- A report released today by the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest (CMPI) and the Coalition for Healthcare Communication reveals that commercial support of continuing medical education (CME) is critical to keeping doctors informed about the latest advances in medicine. The report comes in the wake of congressional and state efforts to bar drug and medical device firms from sponsoring CME programs.

"Some seem to have decided -- without evidence or due process -- that financial support of pharmaceutical, biotech and device companies of continuing medical education is corrupt and harmful but not money from managed care, government, hospitals, foundations, or very rich individuals who want to influence health care policy," said Peter Pitts, President of CMPI. "These critics ignore studies that have shown that physicians benefit from all privately supported continuing medical education, especially those that focus on spreading advances in treating complex diseases to primary care doctors. Proposals to ban industry funded programs is nothing less than a suppression of free speech that will make our health care system dumb and dumber.

Jack Lewin, M.D., the Chief Executive Officer of the American College of Cardiology, explained how organizations like his emphasize transparency in their CME programs. "We make certain that CME activity is absolutely firewalled with a degree of scrutiny," said Lewin. "But were we not to have these additional services which we believe rapidly advance the education of our members and the translation of science to the point of care, the patients and doctors who serve them will be harmed."

The report also explains why efforts to limit industry-funded continuing education programs will exacerbate healthcare disparities between the haves and the have-nots.

"Many industry-supported continuing education programs support physicians who work with traditionally underserved populations," said Robert Goldberg, Vice President of

CMPI. "Curtailling CME would deepen health disparities in America and send a signal that patients of color are less important to the elites driving this debate than their desire to damage drug companies "

Harry Sweeney, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Coalition for Healthcare Communication, said, "Not only is the censorship of commercial health information unconstitutional, it's bad public policy. Some research projects require corporate sponsorship. If scientists avoid such research for fear of tainting their reputations, then medical innovation -- and future patients -- will suffer."

The full report can be read here: <http://cmpi.org/reports-newsletters/reports>
Industry Support for Continuing Education of Healthcare Professionals

Reporters interested in scheduling an interview with the authors of the report should contact Peter J. Pitts at 212-417-9169 / peter.pitts@cmpi.org or John Kamp at 703-801-4582 / jkamp@cohealthcom.org.

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About CMPI

The Center for Medicine in the Public Interest, a non-profit public policy group dedicated to research-based free market reforms for the health care industry.

About the Coalition for Healthcare Communication

The Coalition for Healthcare Communication defends the right of health professionals and consumers to receive truthful information regarding pharmaceuticals and medical products, as safeguarded by the Constitution of the United States.