

Pediatricians Have Fewer Industry Relationships

BY MARY ELLEN SCHNEIDER
New York Bureau

Nearly all physicians have ties to the pharmaceutical or device industries ranging from accepting drug samples to serving on a speakers' bureau, according to a survey of physicians across six specialties.

The study found that 94% of physicians surveyed reported some type of relationship with industry. The most frequently

cited interaction (83%) was receiving food in the workplace. A majority of physicians surveyed (78%) also reported accepting drug samples.

Fewer physicians, about 35%, reported accepting reimbursement for admission to continuing medical education meetings or other meeting-related expenses, and 28% said they received payments from industry for professional services such as consulting, speaking, serving on an advisory board, or enrolling patients in clinical

trials (N. Engl. J. Med. 2007;356:1742-50).

But the study fails to give a clear picture of the relationship between industry and pediatricians, said Dr. Richard Lander, a pediatrician in Livingston, N.J., and chairman of the section on administration and practice management for the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The nature of pediatric practice, from the time constraints to the office-based setting of the practice, tends to mean that pe-

diatricians are less likely to be involved with industry than other specialties, Dr. Lander said. And because most drugs aren't designed with the pediatric patient in mind, the pharmaceutical industry doesn't spend as much time trying to reach pediatricians. "They're not going to make money off of us," he said.

Eric G. Campbell, Ph.D., of the Institute for Health Policy at Massachusetts General Hospital-Partners Health Care System in Boston, and his colleagues surveyed 3,167 physicians working in anesthesiology, cardiology, family practice, general surgery, internal medicine, and pediatrics. Of those surveyed, 1,662

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Groups Seek Tobacco Tax to Fund SCHIP

Federal lawmakers were called upon to approve a tobacco tax increase of 61 cents to fund an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program last month by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association, along with 65 other organizations.

In a joint letter, the groups said that reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is "one of the most important tasks before Congress this year." They noted that SCHIP has significantly improved low-income children's access to care.

"By discouraging smoking through an increase in the tobacco tax and using the resulting revenues to improve enrollment in children's health insurance programs, we are creating a win-win proposition in support of our children's health," the groups said in the joint letter. "It will also result in long-term savings as children become healthier and more productive members of society."

Congress has set aside \$50 billion in new federal funds over the next 5 years for use in SCHIP, which is scheduled to be reauthorized this year. However, under new "pay-as-you-go" rules, the \$50 billion only will be available for SCHIP if Congress cuts other programs or approves new taxes to raise new revenue.

Raising the tobacco tax to provide more funding for SCHIP would help cover many of the 8-9 million uninsured children in the United States while also helping to reduce youth smoking, which would help save health costs down the road, the groups said in the letter to congressional leaders.

"Studies show that every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces youth smoking by 7% and overall cigarette consumption by 4%," the groups wrote. "Increasing the tobacco tax will also generate hundreds of millions of dollars in health care savings because fewer smokers means fewer people with strokes, heart attacks, cancer, and other smoking-related health conditions."

—Jane Anderson