



**nzmsa**

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## Pharmaceutical Industry Sponsorship

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## PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY SPONSORSHIP

This position statement was prepared by Phillip Chao, NZMSA Membership Services Officer 2010, in its initial form as NZMSA's Pharmaceutical Industry Sponsorship Guidelines and passed on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010 by the NZMSA Executive. The NZMSA Executive reaffirmed its commitment to this issue in the form of the current position statement on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of pharmaceutical industry sponsorship was first raised in 2007. At that time, the NZMSA Executive undertook extensive review of student opinion and many hours of debate on the issue. A motion was passed at the 2009 Annual General Meeting that NZMSA will not accept any form of pharmaceutical sponsorship for any of its activities.

### NZMSA POSITION

The New Zealand Medical Students' Association (NZMSA) does not and will not accept any support from the pharmaceutical industry, monetary or otherwise.

NZMSA welcomes student groups who wish to discuss pharmaceutical industry involvement and offers to act in a consultancy capacity to student groups on this issue. NZMSA recommends these following guidelines:

1. Student groups who are considering seeking or receiving support from the pharmaceutical industry should be aware of the potential effects of industry involvement on student behaviours that affect the treatment of patients.
2. Student groups are encouraged to seek alternative support to the pharmaceutical industry and to consider the benefits and harms of support from the industry.
3. Student groups should be clear about what the pharmaceutical industry requires from the group and/or members out of any support.

### BACKGROUND

Research shows that the pharmaceutical industry influences the prescribing patterns of doctors (1-5), publication of research (6-9) and thus potentially the care of patients.

The methods of influence do not only include sponsorship and direct monetary transactions but also "gifts" such as pens, books and lunches (10) which may act on a more subconscious level (11).

### KEY ISSUES FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

Medical student exposure to the pharmaceutical industry differs across countries and years of medical school. Some clinical students have more contact (12) and were more favourable to receiving gifts (13). Medical students surveyed had varying views of the appropriateness to accept gifts from pharmaceutical companies from 26% (14) to 75% depending on the type of gift (15, 16). One survey (17) of students reported 80% believed they were entitled

to gifts, 69% believed it would not influence their practice and only 58% believed it would not influence their colleagues practice. These results are consistent with those of doctors surveyed.

## **CONSULTATION WITH KEY GROUPS**

New Zealand medical students.

## **SUPPORTING LITERATURE/RESEARCH/STATISTICS**

Evidence shows that medical students are vulnerable to the influence of the pharmaceutical industry - financial incentives would alter potential prescribing choice (15); incomplete information from drug representatives decreased sensitivity to the side effects (18); small promotional items such as pens implicitly increased favourable attitudes to the promoted products (19).

Policies that restrict pharmaceutical industry exposure to students and other health care professionals have been effective in decreasing industry influence (19, 20).

## **RELATED NZMSA POSITION STATEMENTS**

None.

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