

PHYSICIANS AND THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

A ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS WORKING PARTY

Submission from the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine - March 2008

The Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom is a registered charity which works to advance the science and practice of pharmaceutical medicine for the benefit of the public.

The Faculty offers the following responses to the questionnaire developed by the RCP "Physicians and Pharmaceutical Industry" Working Party.

1. What should be the nature of the ideal relationship between the pharmaceutical industry, the NHS, and academic medicine?

- Shared goals of improving patient care.
- Respect for the science base in Industry, Academic medicine and the NHS.
- Trust, transparency, partnership, linked objectives.
- Mutual respect of all individuals – all sides need to share ownership and responsibility for actions.
- An acceptance that there can be benefits for all sides working together; but with an understanding of realistic expectations- that pharma needs to make commercial returns on investment; that academics need to publish good science; that the NHS needs new, effective and cost-effective medicines (and medical devices).
- An understanding of the legitimate needs of all groups and the overlap, in both furthering UK PLC and in achieving delivery of a first class health service.
- The Faculty provides the following successful examples from its area of operation which provide examples of commitment to a shared objective:
 - a) The Faculty response to the Duff Report in developing the Diploma and Certificate in Human Pharmacology supported by funding from the Department of Health;
 - b) The examiners for the Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine are drawn from Industry and Academia reflecting a shared commitment to Standards;
 - c) The Fellowship Programme in Clinical Pharmacology where Industry provides 50% of the basic salary and offers a one year placement as part of the 5 year training programme in an NHS and Industry collaboration.

2. What are the current political, economic, commercial, organisational, professional, and public barriers to creating this kind of relationship?

- Political
 - A perception of a government which is negative to the industry and neutral/positive to academia and NHS, as exemplified by the Health Select Committee report.
 - A lack of public recognition by government of UK pharma's contribution to UK PLC
- Economic
 - Cost of doing trials in the UK is high compared to a number of other countries and therefore less trials are undertaken in the UK
 - Increased development time with decreased capacity for return on investment results in increased commercial pressures at launch leading to a diminished perception of industry
- Commercial
 - Company sponsorship of research in general is decreasing unless linked to company objectives
 - Perception of inappropriate spend on advertising and promotion is divisive
- Organisational
 - Difficult, slow and costly to do trials in the NHS in secondary and particularly primary care
 - Regulatory/Ethics committee hurdles in the UK and contract negotiations slow trial initiation and discourage use of UK sites
- Professional
 - Perceptions that pharma-funded trials are biased
 - Potential lack of credibility of physicians who are involved with pharma companies
 - Lack of awareness of the UK Code of Practice
- Public
 - Negative media about drug trials e.g. Te Genero
 - Negative media about industry profits, advertising spend etc
 - Lack of public understanding of development and costs of new medicines
 - Lack of public awareness of contribution of UK pharma to health

3. What changes within industry, the NHS, research, undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, professional and pharmaceutical regulation, and the wider UK political environment would augment and protect the relationship you are describing?

- Education at medical undergraduate level regarding pharmaceutical drug development, greater proactivity of industry to describe achievements.
- Early and open involvement of industry specialists/resources to help in healthcare projects.
- An appreciation of steps that have been taken to improve the regulation of the industry i.e. UK Code of Practice.

- Greater opportunity for movement of NHS, Industry and DoH medical and senior management staff to allow a better understanding of roles, pressures and development opportunities, together with a sharing of best practice.
- Full publication of research results by all researchers, including academia and industry.
- A recognition that the Codes of Conduct/GMC Duties of a Doctor are applicable to all activities and must be enforced.
- A greater recognition of research contributions by the NHS as employers in terms of time allocation and awards to NHS staff.
- A wider demonstrable appreciation by Government and others of the economic benefit of a strong pharmaceutical industry.

4. How can doctors – and specifically the Royal College of Physicians – help to advance an ethical and productive relationship between industry, the NHS, and academic medicine to improve the overall health of the UK population?

- Increase awareness of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine and acknowledge that specialisation in Pharmaceutical Medicine demonstrates achievement of standards comparable to other specialties.
- Inclusion of pharmaceutical physicians in all relevant forums and decision making arenas.
- Championing the speciality of pharmaceutical medicine and increasing the profile of pharmaceutical specialists with relevant organisations and stakeholders.
- Acknowledging the contribution the pharmaceutical industry makes to scientific advancement and thus to new medicines reaching patients.
- Pushing for adequate training / rotation of appropriate staff and an acknowledgement that better health and economic growth will only come from working together on key issues.
- Participate in / drive the development of appropriate guidelines e.g. on Advisory Boards and other relevant physician activities that reinforce standards that are relevant to all concerned parties.

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