

## DENTISTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The use of products produced by the pharmaceutical industry form an important part of the practice of dentistry.
- 1.2 The pharmaceutical industry and dentists interact in the following areas where dentists:
  - administer and prescribe drugs in the practice of dentistry;
  - recommend the use of other pharmaceutical products;
  - receive complimentary information and promotional products from the pharmaceutical industry; and
  - are involved in research and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities in conjunction with the pharmaceutical industry.
- 1.3 **Definition:**
  - 1.3.1 PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY is industry involved in the development, testing, manufacturing and marketing of drugs and other medicinal products.

### 2 Principles

- 2.1 Professional interactions between dentists and the pharmaceutical industry should have as their primary objective the advancement of the health of patients rather than the self-interests of either dentists or the industry.
- 2.2 The primary way in which dentists should be informed about pharmaceutical products should be through independent CPD which could be enhanced by the dental profession and the pharmaceutical industry cooperating in its delivery.
- 2.3 Transparency of arrangements between dentists and the pharmaceutical industry will improve confidence in the self-government role of the dental profession and ensure best treatment outcomes for patients.
- 2.4 Any research projects requiring the active cooperation between the dental profession and the pharmaceutical industry should be conducted under strict ethical guidelines.
- 2.5 Pharmacists, when dispensing drugs, have a valuable role in checking the suitability of prescribed drugs.
- 2.6 It is important that dental students are adequately trained in the ethical issues surrounding the use of pharmaceutical products.

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<sup>1</sup> This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statements: 2.2.2 *Community Oral Health Promotion: Diet and Nutrition*, 2.4 *Research*, 4.2 *Sponsored Continuing Professional Development Activities*, 5.6 *Dental Industry* & 6.5 *Principles of Ethical Dental Practice*

### 3 Policy

3.1 When using or prescribing pharmaceutical products dentists should:

- only administer and prescribe drugs in the practice of dentistry;
- have the advancement of the health of patients as their primary objective;
- not dispense prescription drugs unless there is no reasonable alternative;
- not allow their prescribing habits or use of products to be influenced by personal gifts from the pharmaceutical industry or similar bodies; and
- always maintain professional autonomy, independence and commitment to the scientific method.

3.2 CPD and education regarding pharmaceutical products is essential for dentists to be well informed, and the pharmaceutical industry may contribute to such events provided:

- they address the educational needs of the targeted dental audience and not the marketing needs of the contributing pharmaceutical company;
- dentist organisers have the ultimate decision regarding the organisation, content and choice of CPD activities;
- CPD organisers and their delegates are not in a position of conflict of interest by virtue of any affiliation with the sponsors of those activities;
- financial and/or other aid received is acknowledged in the programme;
- the sponsor's product is not excessively promoted; and
- any travel and accommodation arrangements, social events and venues for industry sponsored CPD activities are in keeping with the arrangements which would be in place in the absence of industry sponsorship.

3.3 When dental research requires the active cooperation between the dental profession and the pharmaceutical industry:

- dentists and dental researchers should satisfy themselves that the project has genuine merit, is not detrimental to the development of other more appropriate areas of research and is ethically defensible, socially responsible and scientifically valid;
- the participation of dentists in research activities sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry should always be preceded by formal approval of the project by an appropriate review body, which should also receive a report upon its completion, and such review should follow national guidelines of the type promulgated by the National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Health Ethics Committee and similar bodies; and
- all monies provided for research should be held in trust for the specified purposes, and such an account should be available for audit.

3.4 Dentists should not:

- be affiliated with pharmaceutical manufacturers if the nature of their affiliation influences their dental practice in an inappropriate fashion;
- knowingly invest in pharmaceutical companies where the investment might influence inappropriately the manner of their practice or their prescribing behavior; nor
- accept a fee or equivalent consideration from pharmaceutical manufacturers or distributors in exchange for participating in promotional or similar activities.

3.5 Dentists may accept educational materials from pharmaceutical companies appropriate to their areas of practice.

3.6 The curricula of Dental Schools should include formal training on the ethical association between dentists and the pharmaceutical industry.

3.7 The pharmaceutical industry should eliminate sugars and acids as additives in medications taken orally.

**Policy Statement 5.12**

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