

the prescription project

Advancing Medical Practice and Policy



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Advances in medicine and medical devices have revolutionized the practice of health care, curing certain diseases and improving the quality of life. However, the \$12 billion spent annually on pharmaceutical marketing has led to real and perceived conflicts of interest. Research has shown that medical decision-making based on marketing rather than independent scientific evidence can compromise patient care, increase health care costs and erode public confidence in the medical profession. The stakes are high: National spending on prescription drugs is nearing \$200 billion per year, growing at double the rate of other health services.

Ensuring that industry-physician relationships are free of conflicts of interest and that physicians base prescription decisions on accurate and unbiased information is essential to promoting safe, sound and cost-effective health care.

Seeking policy solutions. Launched by The Pew Charitable Trusts in 2007, *The Prescription Project*, which is led by Community Catalyst in partnership with the Institute on Medicine as a Profession, seeks to eliminate conflicts of interest created by industry marketing. The Project promotes policy change among academic centers, professional medical societies and public and private payers and advances state- and national-level policy solutions that reduce conflicts of interest and expand the use of evidence-based medicine.

Working with physicians, health care payers, advocates and others, the Project champions recommendations made by a group of leading academics that were published in the January 2006 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. They call upon academic medical centers to embrace policies that effectively govern financial ties between the medical profession and the industry, including prohibiting physicians from accepting industry gifts. The Project also will encourage policies that foster greater reliance by physicians and payers on independent information, such as the evaluations published by the Oregon-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project.

Through a national outreach and education effort, the Project:

- Develops research and issues reports that document the scope of the problem and examine its impact on health care quality and cost;
- Collaborates with leading academic medical centers, physician organizations, public and private health plans, consumer organizations and policy-makers to promote best practices;
- Implements initiatives that encourage state and national leadership to increase the use of evidence-based systems and reduce conflicts of interest; and
- Raises awareness of the need for reform among physicians, payers, consumers, policy-makers, media and the public.

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