

The Living Code

The Code on Physicians' Relationship with Industry

The AMA's Code of Medical Ethics provides ample guidance for the interactions between pharmaceutical companies and physicians.

This issue of *Virtual Mentor* highlights a topical area of professional conduct concerning which the *Code of Medical Ethics* offers much guidance: physicians' relationship with industry. *Code* Opinion 8.061 "Gifts to Physicians from Industry," focuses on gifts proffered, chiefly to clinicians, by pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers and other proprietary health care-related entities. The Opinion issues 7 guidelines for recognizing and managing conflicts of interest that can arise whenever physicians accept gifts, and provides a lengthy clarification of each guideline. Opinion 8.061 considers company-sponsored continuing medical education and company-sponsored drug or product information conferences under the definition of "gifts" to physicians.

Other *Code* opinions offer guidelines for professional conduct in a variety of relationships where financial interest may create conflicts of interest. These include:

Opinion 8.051, "Conflicts of Interest under Capitation"

Opinion 8.054, "Financial Incentives and the Practice of Medicine"

Opinion 8.06, "Drugs and Devices: Prescribing"

Opinion 8.062, "Sale of Non-Health-Related Goods from Physicians' Offices"

Opinion 8.063, "Sale of Health-Related Goods from Physicians' Offices"

Opinion 9.011, "Continuing Medical Education"

Prompted by the rising price of prescription drugs, media reports of drug company influence on physicians, and the growing influence of direct-to-consumer marketing, the AMA convened the Working Group for the Communication of Ethical Guidelines on Gifts to Physicians from Industry in August 2000. The group was composed of representatives of the medical profession and industry and was charged with developing better strategies for educating both physicians and the industry about the *Code's* guidelines. The Working Group has completed 4 online education modules that are available at www.ama-assn.org/go/ethicalgifts.

Related in VM

[The PhRMA Code: A New Roadmap for Industry-Physician Interactions](#), July 2003

[Commercial Support for Continuing Medical Education](#), July 2003

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