

## Ethics and transparency committee of physicians in their relationship with the pharmaceuticals

*Academia Nacional de Medicina de México*

The relationship of physicians with the pharmaceutical industry is, to say the least, ambivalent. Both are fundamental elements of the health care process, but also in the areas of education and research; we need each other and it is advisable to keep a mature, respectful and honest alliance. On one hand, we as physicians need the pharmaceutical industry in order to obtain the drugs to treat our patients and the industry needs us to implement their use. But there's more to it: the industry funds continued medical education, sponsors research with drugs and medical devices, informs physicians on therapeutic advances, answers the needs of doctors and patients; it uses physicians to promote its products, to convince those who are skeptical or mistrustful, to position its medications in standard treatment regimens and to know the post-marketing outcomes of its products. So far, this relationship is, with no doubt, positive for both parties, as well as reasonable. But there are also other aspects. Things start breaking down in some circumstances when the industry tries to manipulate educational programs, when it sponsors only speakers linked to its products, when it tries to manipulate research results or refuses to publish those not favoring its products, when it promotes skewed or poorly planned investigations, when it bribes doctors (presents, travels, grants) who are loyal or for them to become loyal, when it makes its sponsorships depend on its commercial interests, when it spreads non-validated or even false information among the public and professionals, but also when physicians accept payoffs, subordinate to the sponsors' interests, adjust their prescribing behavior to manufacturers or distributors recommendations, when

they denigrate their public behavior to obtain promotional items, when they abandon their academic activities to engage in the harvest of presents in congresses or make the prescription of a certain brand conditional to obtaining personal funding benefits for grants or travels.

The National Academy of Medicine has undertaken the analysis of the physicians' posture and develops proposals to look for a more sound relationship. It starts by acknowledging that this relationship has to be regulated based on our own rules, which build upon not secretly negotiating, making agreements transparent, disclosing sponsorships and clearly demarcating each party's rights and responsibilities, not betraying individual and professional ethics, respecting others' work and putting the patients' wellbeing above everything else, establishing a code of good practice for the relationship with the industry as a guideline that physicians undertake to comply with. The CETREMI (Committee of Ethics and Transparency of Physicians in Relation to the Pharmaceutical Industry) was created for this purpose, as a working group of the National Academy of Medicine that precisely represents the voice of physicians in this peculiar interaction, but also before regulatory entities and authorities.

The opinions and recommendations issued by the CETREMI will always have the benefit of the patient as their final intention. The CETREMI original document contains 4 principles:

1. The patient comes first.
2. Support to ethical research and innovation.
3. Emphasis on academic independence and ethical behavior.
4. Promotion of transparency and accountability.

### Correspondence:

Academia Nacional de Medicina de México  
Unidad de Congresos del Centro Médico Nacional Siglo XXI  
Bloque B, Avda. Cuauhtémoc, 330  
Col. Doctores, C.P. 06725, México, D.F., México  
E-mail: alifshitzg@yahoo.com