

UNCATEGORIZED

ETHICS IN PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

23.01.2008

There are still two remarkable pieces from the last year here on my desk – one is a book review by Dr. Jerome Kassirer (the former NEJM editor) and the second is about a book by Dr. Richard Smith (the former BMJ editor – so only Dr. Richard Horton from the Lancet is missing from this list of the most influential medical editors during the past decade). What makes me wonder that both editors have a rather critical account on pharmaceutical ethics. [Dr. Kassirer is writing in Open Medicine](#)

There is also little mention of shameless attempts by manufacturers to extend their monopolies, to block the production and sale of generic drugs, to put undue influence on the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), to buy off large cadres of doctors, to promote drugs to treat social conditions, and to spend more money on marketing than on research.

He describes how the profit-seeking culture has nothing to do with the societal responsibility although industry people always argue that private profits achieve a public good. I admit that it is important also for every employee in the pharmaceutical industry to have his income like everybody else but it is certainly not necessary to earn as much money as some of the executives do. I even believe that is even inappropriate for us scientists to occupy the first seats in the airplane and stay at the most marvelous and resorts while leaving our doctoral students at home.

The book of Dr. Smith has partly to do with the same story, as found in a review in the Medical Post by Nov 14, 2006 of Charles Godfrey which vanished already from the internet (the link now leads to a different password protected site).

The Journal of Medical Ethics queried editors about ethical problems. “I don’t have any.” was the standard reply. There is no code of ethics for journals.

Unfortunate this seems to be true. There are lengthy lists that authors now have to answer but no code of ethics that would allow a judgment if advertisements in medical journals re-

late to the substances discussed in the peer reviewed articles. And having attended probably more than 100 congresses I have NEVER seen any cost statement or any balance of these events, yea, yea.

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