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It is all perfectly legal: Drug companies hand out hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of free meals, travel, gifts, & lucrative speaking fees to physicians to promote the same drugs & medical devices that those doctors may prescribe to their patients.

The potential for conflicts of interest has spurred Congress to demand that all drug companies must make these payments public. By the fall of 2014, every company was required to list every payment it makes to a medical professional & what each payment is for. [The Sunshine Act]

Research shows that even small gifts that are given to physicians actually do influence their prescribing habits. The question should be asked, to what extent is the doctor really acting in their best interest, or is the doctor acting because they're basically being paid to promote the drug?

In 2016, research showed:

- Doctors who received industry payments were 2-3x's as likely to prescribe brand-name drugs at exceptionally high rates as others in their specialty.
- Physicians who received more than \$5,000 from drug companies & others in 2014 for speeches, meals, consultations or other promotional activities typically had the highest brand-name prescribing percentages (30% vs. 20% who didn't accept payments).

The analysis raises some troubling economic & ethical issues. It demonstrates that there is a proven relationship between physicians receiving money from drug companies other than for research & the way that they prescribe drugs.

When there are HUGE financial incentives, it's only common sense to question/wonder what factors a doctor is utilizing when deciding if to prescribe as well as what to prescribe. As a patient, ALWAYS ask questions. It's YOUR health.