*International Psychogeriatrics* (2007), 19:6, 1003–1020 © 2007 International Psychogeriatric Association
doi:10.1017/S1041610207006023 Printed in the United Kingdom

# FOR DEBATE: IS THE INFLUENCE OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY ON PRESCRIBING, RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION IN THE FIELD OF PSYCHOGERIATRICS EXCESSIVE?

## Introduction

Does the pharmaceutical industry exert excessive influence on prescribing, research and publication in the field of psychogeriatrics? This is a topic about which I receive a significant number of emails and one which often gets discussed when those active in research in our discipline get together (at both sponsored and unsponsored events!).

On the one hand, one might argue that reports of payments from pharmaceutical companies to publicly funded researchers that lead to legal sanctions (msnbc, 2006), and the creation of potentially spurious new disease entities so that "treatments" for them can be marketed (Breitstein, 2004) are clear evidence of a culture in serious need of urgent reform and increased regulation. On the other hand, one might note that without venture capitalism worthwhile new drugs (e.g. proton pump inhibitors, anti-viral agents to treat HIV, and (perhaps) cholinesterase inhibitors to treat Alzheimer's disease, to give just three examples) might not have been developed at all (certainly the achievements of fully socialized economies such as the former Soviet Union have been hardly impressive in this regard), and one could record in addition that journals like our own are attempting to end the suppression of trial results that are unfavorable to certain drugs by insisting on the prior public registration of all evaluative drug trials before their results can be considered for publication (Ames, 2006).

This sounds like the sort of topic that needs debating, and so, continuing our popular "for debate" series (Ames *et al.*, 2005; Ames *et al.*, 2006; Ganguli *et al.*, 2007; O'Brien *et al.*, 2007), Shah and Finucane go head to head with Bhattacharyya and Burns to hammer out the key issues. What may surprise some readers is the extent to which our commentators, Flicker and Almeida, find substantial common ground in what, at first glance, might appear to be two utterly incompatible points of view.

DAVID AMES
Editor, *International Psychogeriatrics*
University of Melbourne, Australia
Email: ipaj-ed@unimelb.edu.au

First published online 22 August 2007.



https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610207006023 Published online by Cambridge University Press