

JAMA Says Drug Companies Too Cozy with Docs

Editorials published yesterday in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* said that drug companies have a growing and sometimes unseemly influence on doctors.

Experts claim that research needs industry dollars. The top 10 pharmaceutical companies spent nearly \$23 billion on clinical research last year - more than the nearly \$18 billion provided by the National Institutes of Health, said the JAMA editor, Dr. Catherine DeAngelis.

The problem is when researchers have financial interests in companies funding their work. DeAngelis said such research is lower in quality and more likely to report findings favorable to the company.

One study found that 7.6 percent of the faculty researchers at the University of California at San Francisco had personal financial ties to their drug company sponsors last year.

Drug Company Tied To Block Negative Aids Vaccine Results

A California company unsuccessfully tried to block the publication of a scientific paper that showed its HIV vaccine was not effective, and it has asked for damages of more than \$7 million from the universities and researchers who published the findings. This story was reported in the Healthmall newsletter yesterday.

The company, Immune Response Corp. of Carlsbad, Calif., makes Remune, a vaccine intended to boost the body's defenses against HIV after people are already infected. The drug was tested between 1996 and 1999 on more than 2,500 people with the infection in one of the largest HIV - treatment studies ever carried out.

Paid for by the company, the studies were stopped in May 1999 before they were complete because analysis of the results from more than two years showed that the vaccine was not working. Patients who got the vaccine died or progressed from being symptom-free to having AIDS-related infections as often as those getting placebos.

The chief investigators on the study, Dr. James Kahn at the University of California-San Francisco and Dr. Stephen Lagakos at the Harvard School of Public Health, then prepared a paper on the disappointing results.

But the company objected to what the two intended to publish, said Dr. Ronald Moss, the company's vice president of scientific and medical affairs, and Dr. Dennis Carlo, its chief executive officer.

The company told the investigators that the data belonged to the company and that they would not give permission to publish them.