

Doctor groups set new policy to curb industry sway

April 21 2010, By MARILYNN MARCHIONE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- No more letting industry help pay for developing medical guidelines. Restrictions on consulting deals. And no more pens with drug company names or other swag at conferences.

These are part of a new ethics code that dozens of leading medical groups announced Wednesday, aimed at limiting the influence that drug and device makers have over patient care.

It's the most sweeping move ever taken by the Council of Medical Specialty Societies to curb [conflict of interest](#) - a growing concern as private industry bankrolls a greater share of medical research.

The council includes 32 medical societies with 650,000 members, from neurologists and obstetricians to family doctors and pediatricians. They include the American College of Physicians, the American College of Cardiology and the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the largest group of cancer specialists in the world.

"We take very seriously the trust that is placed in us by physicians and patients to be authoritative, independent voices in cancer care," ASCO's chief, Dr. Allen Lichter, said in a statement. He led the panel that developed the code.

One of its most controversial rules: requiring top leaders of any medical society and top editors of its journals to have no consulting deals or [financial ties](#) to industry.

"When a physician stands up to represent medicine and his or her specialty, there shouldn't be any confusion as to who they're speaking for," said Dr. Norman Kahn, the council's chief executive and a former rural medicine doctor from California.

The code requires groups to:

- Publicly post any industry support the group receives, such as money for continuing education sessions.

- Decline industry funding for developing medical practice guidelines, such as who should get a drug, a test or treatment. Require that most members of a guidelines panel be free of financial ties to industry.

- Disclose any financial ties that leaders and board members have with companies.

- Ban company or product names and logos from pens, bags and other giveaways at conferences.

Fourteen groups in the council, including ASCO and the College of Physicians, have already adopted the code. Most of the rest plan to by the end of the year.

Last year, leading medical journals agreed to use a uniform conflict-of-interest disclosure form for researchers publishing in their journals. The new ethics code the council is adopting should make financial ties more transparent to patients and breed professionalism and trust in doctors, Kahn said.

More information: Ethics code:

www.cmss.org/codeforinteractions.aspx

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