

Survey: Most family medicine residencies restrict interactions between trainees, industry

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A national survey of U.S. family medicine residency programs finds that most limit pharmaceutical and other industry interactions with residents while many exclude all interactions. The results, published in the May issue of *Academic Medicine*, suggest a major shift away from acceptance of food, gifts, samples, and industry-supported events. The survey was a joint effort between Georgetown University Medical Center and the American Medical Student Association (AMSA).

There are more than 400 accredited family medicine residency programs in the country . responsible for training family medicine physicians. Previous studies suggest that almost all physicians-in-training (medical students and residents) have interacted in some way with pharmaceutical, medical device or biotechnology companies. Research shows that interactions -- meeting with representatives; accepting gifts, food, and samples; and sponsored talks -- between industry and trainees, as they develop their practice habits, -- - affect prescribing patterns.

"There isn't any evidence that pharmaceutical representatives provide objective information to trainees," says Adriane Fugh-Berman, M.D., a professor of pharmacology at Georgetown University Medical Center. "To the contrary, studies have shown that the information they provide favors targeted drugs and that many assertions reps make are inconsistent with FDA-approved prescribing information."

In 2008, study authors sent out a four-question survey to the directors or coordinators of all 460 accredited family medicine residency programs.

The survey comprised the following questions:

1. Does the residency allow gifts from industry or industry-supported food?
2. Are drug samples accepted?
3. Are industry representatives allowed access to medical students and/or residents at the family medicine center?
4. Are any industry-sponsored residency activities allowed?

Additional space was provided on the survey for comments.

More than half (62.2 percent) of the programs submitted a response. Among responding family medicine residency programs, 52.1 percent reported that they refused [drug samples](#), 48.6 percent disallowed industry gifts or food, 68.5 percent did not allow industry-sponsored residency activities, and 44.1 percent denied industry access to students and residents at the family medicine center.

Seventy-five residencies (26.2 percent) were designated as "pharma-free," meaning they didn't allow any of the activities described.

"Family medicine is leading the way in closing the door on pharma," Fugh-Berman says. "We were surprised that so many residencies were refusing all industry perks." She adds that a 1992 study found that 90 percent of family medicine residencies allowed industry support.

"Our [survey](#) allowed for comments so we know that some residency programs report recent changes in plans or practices to limit industry interaction. Although some faculty and some residents are opposed to these limits, it's clear that industry influence on family medicine residencies is waning."

The study's authors concluded that industry interactions can have adverse effects on rational prescribing and residency programs should assess the benefits and harms of these relationships.

Provided by Georgetown University Medical Center

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