

# More cutting-edge cancer research supported by industry

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Nearly half of the research presented at ASCO's annual meeting last year came from researchers with ties to companies, and the amount appears to be increasing every year, according to new findings from Fox Chase Cancer Center. The new findings will be presented this year at the 2012 American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting on Monday, June 4.

"The results suggest that there may be an increasing dependence on industry to support cancer research," says study author Angela R. Bradbury, M.D., assistant professor in the Department of [Clinical Genetics](#) at Fox Chase. "This doesn't mean the research is flawed or biased in any way," she cautions, "but it does mean that the professional and research community has to investigate the impact of these relationships and find ways to manage any potential [conflicts of interest](#)."

Bradbury and her colleagues reviewed research submitted to the 2011 American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting, which requires all authors who want to present their findings to state if they have any relationships with industry. This includes being employed by a company, as well as owning stock, serving as a consultant or expert witness, and receiving honoraria for giving talks or participating in [research projects](#).

They found that 48% of research accepted for presentation at the meeting in 2011 came from a group where at least one author had a relationship to industry—up from 39% of research presented in 2006.

These ties to industry appeared to increase every year.

Interestingly, in a second related abstract by the same authors, Beverly Moy, M.D., M.P.H., clinical director of the Breast [Oncology](#) Program and a medical oncologist at the Massachusetts General Hospital, reported that high profile research—selected to be presented more prominently at the meeting—was more likely to come from scientists with relationships to industry. Studies from authors with ties to industry also tended to receive higher scores from their peers.

"This finding doesn't mean that researchers with industry have some 'in' that others don't," says Bradbury. "Rather, it suggests that authors of much of the cutting-edge, clinically important research have relationships with industry."

This is not a surprise, she says, given that other sources of research funding have dried up recently. "We need money for [cancer research](#), and it has to come from somewhere. The government has had to cut back on its support, and with the economic crisis research foundations have less money to allocate as well."

But if cancer researchers are going to continue to link up with companies that can profit from their data, the community has to be aware of the potential issues, Bradbury cautions. "If we're going to have relationships with industry, we're going to have to find ways to monitor and manage these relationships, to ensure they don't end up biasing any results."

Given that many great clinicians work with companies, patients shouldn't worry about asking their doctors if they personally have ties to [industry](#), Bradbury reassures. "Whether or not a doctor has a relationship with a company shouldn't have any impact on patient care," she says.

Provided by Fox Chase Cancer Center

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