

New book explores moral jeopardy of addictive industry influences

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'Moral Jeopardy', a new book by Professor Peter Adams, examines the risks of accepting profits linked to tobacco, alcohol and gambling industries.

"Tobacco, alcohol and gambling corporations have been highly effective in stalling, diverting and blocking public health measures with proven effectiveness in reducing harm," says Professor Adams, who is an expert on the social impacts of addictions at the University of Auckland.

"Leaders in public good organisations such as universities, government agencies, and health services, face increasing pressure to accept profits from these dangerous consumption industries," he says.

'Moral Jeopardy' details the risks of accepting such profits and what might be done to reduce those risks.

The book starts with the concept of a continuum of 'moral jeopardy' that allows people to focus on the extent to which they are willing to accept funding.

"This shift encourages people to think and speak more about the risks and to develop a clearer position for themselves," says Professor Adams.

The book is an engaging exposé of the ethical issues faced by people and organizations when they accept industry money in ways that facilitate corporate influence with policy-makers.

In the book, Professor Adams confronts ethical issues associated with conflicts of interest that influence what happens in governments, communities and universities.

He also develops a framework for action and intervention aimed at reducing conflicts of interest in science, public health and government policy.

The book draws on Professor Adams' background

in psychology, philosophy, public health, social theory and addiction studies to describe innovative ways of reducing harm from alcohol, tobacco and gambling.

He engages readers with examples and stories and invites them to think carefully about how accepting industry money serves to support industry interests in profiting from those who are harmed by these consumptions.

Some of the issues that he looks at include whether or not it is okay to accept profits from alcohol, tobacco and gambling; what to consider when looking at funding from unethical industry sources; practical ways of assessing the risks of accepting profits from addictive products; how to devise policies to prevent unethical associations with these industries; and what an organisation needs to look out for when considering funding from unethical sources.

"Addictive consumptions are a special form of consumptions in that when people develop these addictions they spend a lot of money," says Professor Adams. "The profit margins for corporates is highly influenced by how many or how few addictive consumers there are."

"What's really critical for industry purposes is to influence policy making, because policy is the big threat to industry - constraining their capacity to exploit or profit from addictive consumers," he says.

"The book focusses on various ways that industry influences policy making and the main mechanism that they do that is via intermediaries – people who accept funding from industries."

"The industry's intention is to produce research that diverts attention away from public health measures," he says. "Industries often fund research into treatments or into behaviour orientated interventions that imply individuals are at fault - not

the product or the way that the industry or government have managed it."

The book explores the concept of moral jeopardy in more detail and the way in which silence is achieved around influence.

It also examines the activities of industry-funded public good agencies such as alcohol awareness campaigns, that make it look like the industry has public health credibility while it focusses on individualist strategies not on [public health](#).

Professor Adams also looks at health provider dilemmas around accepting funding and taking part in tripartite committees with the government and industry that pursue their own agendas.

He also examines the issue of community groups co-opted by funding to become dependent on these sources and how this compromises the sovereignty of these groups.

The book concludes with a section on moral jeopardy prevention strategies around a harm reduction based prevention framework.

He also details treatment programmes and other resources that can help readers to move away from being funded by addictive consumption [industry](#) sources.

"More moral jeopardy issues are going to emerge in the future such as with unhealthy food and pharmaceuticals," he says. "These strategies enables people to make more educated and informed decisions."

Provided by University of Auckland

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