

Recently, a workshop regarding treatment of atopic dermatitis was held in Sweden by our medical products agency. It was quite evident that newer (and more expensive) treatments are better evidence-based than older therapies.

Nevertheless, we need information about new drugs from the pharmaceutical industry. Taking part in international and national conferences is important.

Regarding clinical research; it is important that it be performed as usual, as is also, of course, transparency.

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## Stricter Rules for Doctor-Industry Relations in Norway

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In Norway, the pharmaceutical industry is not allowed to participate in meetings recognised as part of specialist training and continuing medical education. Hospital doctors may participate in meetings organized by pharmaceutical companies only with the approval of their employer.

These are some of the points in a new agreement between the Norwegian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and the Norwegian Medical Association on relations between doctors and the pharmaceutical industry. The new agreement took ef-

fect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. The Norwegian Society of Dermatology is part of the Norwegian Medical Association.

According to a recent article in *Tidskrift for Den norske lægeforening* (1), the main purpose of the agreement is to contribute to credible and confidence-inspiring doctor-industry relations and better development and proper use of drugs. Doctor-industry cooperation must not create any dependency or doubt regarding the independence of doctors. All forms of cooperation should be clear, open and transparent.

The agreement contains an initial declaration of its purpose, and in eight chapters detailed rules regarding doctorindustry relations are outlined. Laws, regulations and rules, including anti-corruption laws, are referred to. Here are some central elements of the new agreement.

### Written and open agreements

All agreements between pharmaceutical companies and medical associations/societies must be in writing, except for visits by pharmaceutical representatives during ordinary working hours. This require-

ment also applies to doctors doing consultancy work for pharmaceutical companies. The written agreements must be available for the general public. Meeting organizers must not favour one company. All speakers at meetings must give information on any conflicts of interest.

### Courses, congresses and meetings

Pharmaceutical companies may not sponsor or co-organize meetings recognised as part of specialist training and continuing medical education. Expenses for travel, accommodation and meals for such meetings may not be covered by pharmaceutical companies.

For meetings sponsored or organized by pharmaceutical companies, the programme must be sent to the Council for Drug Information before the meeting. Expenses for travel, accommodation and meals must not exceed government rates. Doctors employed by a hospital or company may participate at such meetings only with the approval of their employer. There are several limitations on meetings abroad, and all meetings organized primarily for Norwegian doctors should be held in Norway.

Meetings arranged abroad must be approved by the Council for Drug Information.

Advertisements for drugs are not allowed in Internet-based courses that are recognised as part of specialist training and continuing medical education. For meetings, maximum rates for exhibition displays and advertisements may be agreed upon. Money from pharmaceutical companies for prizes and scholarships should be put into funds on which the pharmaceutical industry has no influence. Contributions from many companies should be encouraged. Pharmaceutical companies are not allowed to sponsor costs related to the administration of medical associations/societies, and support membership or unspecified contributions are not allowed.

Doctors are not allowed to ask for rent for rooms when pharmaceutical representatives are visiting a practice or hospital, but the pharmaceutical company may provide a modest meal. The values of gifts (medical literature, medical equipment) must not exceed 1,000 NOK (about 125 Euro). Doctors employed by a hospital or company must have the approval of their employer to do consultancy work for a pharmaceutical company.

### Research cooperation

One chapter deals with research and drug development projects. Information on all projects that are not required to be approved by Norwegian drug authorities and/or regional ethical committees, must be sent to

the Council for Drug Information. Projects that may be regarded as concealed marketing are not allowed. Publication of results must be done according to the principals of good scientific conduct.

The new agreement between the Norwegian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and the Norwegian Medical Association can be downloaded from the Internet (2).

### Literature

1. Strand S, Andersen EJ. Ny avtale om forholdet til legemiddelindustrien [New agreement on relations with the pharmaceutical industry]. *Tidsskr Nor Lægeforen* 2005; 125: 207.
2. <http://www.legeforeningen.no/index.gan?id=55565&subid=0> (4.4 2005)

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## Relations Between Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry in Finland

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The nature and magnitude of contacts between physicians and the pharmaceutical industry in Finland are probably not all that different compared to the other Nordic countries. Contacts are mainly in the form of representative calls, supported domestic and international meetings,



lectures, and participation in clinical trials sponsored by the industry. During recent years, the traditional contacts in form of representative calls have decreased in popularity. The industry has noticed difficulties

in upholding this kind of activity. Increased competition has brought more representatives onto the field, and hospitals have simultaneously restricted the access of representatives to their physicians. Also local small meetings organised by companies have lost some of their attraction, mostly because there are too many meetings to attend, and because physicians seem to value their free time more and more in an accelerated work environment.

Like in most European countries the pharmaceutical companies in Finland have, through their organisation Pharma Industry Finland,