

Pharmaceutical Marketing: Report on Education on Pharmaceutical Promotion in Medical Training

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Medicines are intended to prevent or cure medical conditions, or positively contribute to treatment, but it is important that they are used rationally. It has been estimated, however, that globally more than half of all medicines are prescribed, dispensed or sold inappropriately, and that half of all patients do not take them correctly.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the Rational Use of Medicines requires that:

“patients receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet their own individual requirements, for an adequate period of time, and at the lowest cost to them and their community”.

Healthcare professionals play a key role in ensuring the rational use of medicines. But often they are the target of promotional activities by the pharmaceutical industry, which has been shown to influence professional judgement. Some of the tactics used by companies to nurture their relationship with healthcare professionals involve the provision of hospitality to attend events, offering speaking fees and free gifts. Companies also use sales representatives to build personal relationships and distribute free samples to healthcare professionals. These activities can stimulate demand for new, expensive products which are not always the best or the most affordable treatment option available.

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