

Medicines Australia Code of Conduct: breaches

Medicines Australia has a code of conduct to guide the promotion of prescription drugs by pharmaceutical companies in Australia.¹ Complaints are reviewed by the Code of Conduct Committee and the results are published in its annual report. The report for 2005 is available on the Medicines Australia website.²

There were 51 new complaints in 2004–05. Four of these were withdrawn and three are unresolved. As the report includes two complaints held over from the previous year, it contains 46 cases completed by the Code of Conduct Committee.

As usual most of the complaints came from rival companies. It is possible that some complaints are part of a company's strategy as it jostles for market share. In some cases the Code of Conduct Committee had to decide if complainants were abusing the Code.

In 2005 there were 35 complaints in which at least one breach of the Code was found (Table 1), however one case was dismissed on appeal (it involved a \$50 000 fine for offering a

\$500 fee for attending a round table meeting). Details of the complaints can be found in the annual report.²

References

1. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct. 14th ed. Canberra: Medicines Australia; 2003.
2. 2005 Code of Conduct Annual Report. Canberra: Medicines Australia; 2005. www.medicinesaustralia.com.au

Note: Edition 15 of the Medicines Australia Code of Conduct is available from:

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Table 1

Breaches of the Medicines Australia Code of Conduct July 2004 – June 2005

Company	Complaint		Sanction imposed by Code of Conduct Committee
	Drug – brand name	Drug – generic name	
Abbott	Humira	adalimumab	Withdrawal of promotional material \$5000 fine
Aspen	Permax	pergolide	Withdrawal of promotional material Company to undertake education about the Code of Conduct \$2500 fine
Aspen	Tazac	nizatidine	Withdrawal of promotional material
AstraZeneca	Symbicort	budesonide/eformoterol	\$100 000 fine for promoting product to advisory boards, reduced on appeal to \$25 000
Baxter	meningococcal C vaccine		Withdrawal of material for general public Full-page educational advertisements to be placed in Family Circle, Women's Day, Good Health, and on company's website
Bayer and GlaxoSmithKline	Levitra	vardenafil	Withdrawal of promotional material from website for general public
Bayer and GlaxoSmithKline	Levitra	vardenafil	Withdrawal of material for general public \$100 000 fine
Boehringer Ingelheim	Asasantin	aspirin and dipyridamole	Promotional material not to be used again without qualification
Bristol-Myers Squibb	Perfalgan	paracetamol	\$10 000 fine for promoting product before approval for marketing
Galderma	Metvix	methyl-5-aminolevulinic acid	Withdrawal of promotional material

Galderma	Metvix	methyl-5-aminolevulinate	Withdrawal of promotional material
Galderma	Metvix	methyl-5-aminolevulinate	Withdrawal of promotional material
GlaxoSmithKline	Avandia	rosiglitazone	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter to seminar attendees
GlaxoSmithKline	Avandia	rosiglitazone	Withdrawal of promotional material \$15 000 fine
GlaxoSmithKline	Seretide	fluticasone/salmeterol	Withdrawal of promotional material
Janssen-Cilag	Pariet	rabeprazole	Withdrawal of promotional material
Janssen-Cilag	Pariet	rabeprazole	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter \$25 000 fine reduced to \$24 000 on appeal
Merck Sharp & Dohme	Ezetrol	ezetimibe	Withdrawal of promotional material
Merck Sharp & Dohme	Fosamax	alendronate	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter
Novo Nordisk	NovoMix 30	insulin	Withdrawal of promotional material \$50 000 fine for discussing drug with a member of the public
Organon	Puregon Pen	follitropin beta	Withdrawal of promotional material \$5000 fine
Pfizer	Celebrex	celecoxib	\$150 000 fine for media release to the general public, reduced on appeal to \$30 000
Pfizer	Celebrex	celecoxib	\$25 000 fine
Pfizer	Somac	pantoprazole	Withdrawal of promotional material \$15 000 fine
Pfizer	Zoloft	sertraline	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter \$20 000 fine
Roche	Xenical	orlistat	\$20 000 fine for providing unbalanced information to a television station
Sanofi-Aventis	Actonel	risedronate	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter \$50 000 fine
Sanofi-Aventis	Epilim	valproate	Withdrawal of promotional material \$50 000 fine
Sanofi-Aventis	Solian	amisulpride	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter to recipients of guidelines and destruction of remaining copies \$20 000 fine
Sanofi-Synthelabo	Plavix	clopidogrel	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective advertisement
Serono	Gonal-F Pen	follitropin alfa	Withdrawal of promotional material Corrective letter \$15 000 fine
Servier	Diamicron MR	gliclazide	Withdrawal of promotional material \$5000 fine
Wyeth	Efexor-XR	venlafaxine	Withdrawal of promotional material \$15 000 fine reduced on appeal to \$14 000