

# Medicines Australia Code of Conduct: breaches

The Medicines Australia Code of Conduct guides the promotion of prescription products by pharmaceutical companies.<sup>1</sup> Each year Medicines Australia publishes a report, from its Code of Conduct Committee, which details all the complaints that have been received about advertising and other promotional activities. The Table shows the complaints where at least one breach was identified, and more details can be found in the full report.<sup>2</sup> The complaints were dealt with under the current (18th) edition of the Code of Conduct.<sup>1</sup>

The number of companies found to have breached the Code of Conduct is small compared to all the promotional activity undertaken by the

pharmaceutical industry. Most of the complaints came from competitors or Medicines Australia's own Monitoring Committee. Only the complaint about the advertising of agomelatine came from a health professional. This case hinged on the references used to support the claims in the advertisement.

There was an appeal against the Code of Conduct Committee's decision in the abiraterone case. This included discussion of the definition of 'energy' in three different dictionaries.

The Monitoring Committee considered that a two-course lunch for two specialists was inappropriate. The price of the meal was \$153.86, but it cost the company \$10,000 in fines.

**Key words**

Medicines Australia, codes of conduct

*Aust Prescr* 2016;39:219

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18773/austprescr.2016.089>

**Table Breaches of the Code of Conduct July 2015 – June 2016**

Company	Brand (generic) name	Material or activity	Sanction
Bristol-Myers Squibb	Sprycel (dasatinib)	Misleading promotional material	\$50 000 fine, material withdrawn
Bristol-Myers Squibb	Opdivo (nivolumab)	Unregistered product, company commissioned article	\$10 000 fine
Janssen-Cilag	Zytiga (abiraterone)	Misleading promotional claims	\$100 000 fine, material withdrawn, corrective letter to specialists
Merck Serono	Not applicable	Excessive hospitality	\$10 000 fine
Roche Products	Gazyva (obinutuzumab)	Inappropriate interaction with consumer media	\$100 000 fine
Servier Laboratories	Valdoxan (agomelatine)	Misleading advertising	\$100 000 fine, material withdrawn

**REFERENCES**

1. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct. 18th ed. 2015. <http://medicinesaustralia.com.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-current-edition> [cited 2016 Nov 1]
2. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct Annual Report 2015–16. <https://medicinesaustralia.com.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-reports/annual-reports> [cited 2016 Nov 1]