

# 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.

There were only 12 complaints made to Medicines Australia in 2011-12. Half of these complaints were made by health professionals.

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>

Companies reported on tens of thousands of educational events they had organised or sponsored. Only two of these presentations resulted in complaints and neither event was found to have breached the Code of Conduct.

The largest fine this year resulted from a website which encouraged healthcare professionals and the public to petition the Government to reverse its decision to defer the listing of dabigatran, for stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation, on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The New South Wales Therapeutic Advisory Group (NSW TAG) complained that some of the content of the website was intended to promote the product. While the Code of Conduct Committee agreed that the first version of the website was promotional, it considered that an amended version did not breach the Code. The NSW TAG appealed against that decision. While the Code of Conduct Appeals Committee decided that the second version had also breached the Code, it did not impose any additional financial sanction.

A new version of the Code of Conduct, edition 17, is scheduled to commence on 1 January 2013.

**Key words**

Medicines Australia, breaches

*Aust Prescr 2012;35:207*

**Table Breaches of the Code of Conduct July 2011 – June 2012**

Company	Brand (generic) name	Material or activity	Sanction
Alcon Laboratories	Travatan (travoprost)	Misleading claim in detailing aid	\$25 000 fine Claim not to be used again
Boehringer Ingelheim	Pradaxa (dabigatran)	Website indirectly promoting the product to the general public	\$125 000 fine Website to be removed
CSL	Flomaxtra (tamsulosin)	Misleading claims in promotional material Promotion to the general public	\$75 000 fine Patient educational material not to contain promotional material
Merck Sharp and Dohme	Sevikar (amlodipine with olmesartan)	Misleading claims in detailing aid	\$25 000 fine Claims not to be used again
Novartis Pharmaceuticals	Onbrez Breezhaler (indacaterol)	Misleading claims in detailing aid	\$100 000 fine Claims not to be used again
Sanofi-Aventis	Actonel EC (risedronate)	Promotional message in media release	\$40 000 fine Material not to be used again

**REFERENCES**

1. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct. 16th ed. 2010. <http://medicinesaustralia.com.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-current-edition> [cited 2012 Nov 8]
2. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct Annual Report 2012. [http://medicinesaustralia.com.au/files/2010/01/20121018-PUB-CoC-AnnualReport-2011\\_2012.pdf](http://medicinesaustralia.com.au/files/2010/01/20121018-PUB-CoC-AnnualReport-2011_2012.pdf) [cited 2012 Nov 8]