

Medicines Australia Code of Conduct: breaches

The Medicines Australia Code of Conduct guides the promotion of prescription products by pharmaceutical companies.¹ 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 latest report² reflects the first year of operation of the 16th edition of the Code. As usual, most complaints about promotional activity were made by rival pharmaceutical companies or the Medicines Australia Monitoring Committee. Only about half of

the complaints resulted in a breach of the Code being found. Table 1 shows the complaints where at least one breach was identified and more details can be found in the full report.²

References

1. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct. 16th ed. 2009. www.medicinesaustralia.com.au [cited 2010 Nov 16]
2. Medicines Australia. Code of Conduct Annual Report 2010. www.medicinesaustralia.com.au [cited 2010 Nov 16]

Table 1

Breaches of the Code of Conduct July 2009 – June 2010

Company	Brand (generic) name	Material or activity	Sanction imposed by Code of Conduct Committee
Allergan	Botox (botulinum toxin)	Promotional material	\$100 000 fine Withdraw material Corrective letter
Biogen Idec	Tysabri (natalizumab)	Promotional material	\$75 000 fine Withdraw material Corrective advertisement
Boehringer Ingelheim	Mobic (meloxicam)	Advertorial	\$50 000 fine Corrective advertisement
CSL	Human papillomavirus vaccine	Information for the public	\$1000 fine
	Various	Starter packs	\$1000 fine
Genzyme	Renagel (sevelamer)	Patient education leaflet	\$25 000 fine Withdraw material Corrective letter
GlaxoSmithKline	Valtrex (valaciclovir)	Advertising to the public	\$150 000 fine reduced to \$20 000 on appeal
Merck Sharp & Dohme	–	Hospitality for specialists	\$20 000 fine
	–	Hospitality for specialists	\$40 000 fine
	–	Hospitality for specialists	\$50 000 fine reduced to \$10 000 on appeal
Pharmalink	Pletal (cilostazol)	Hospitality for specialists and general practitioners	\$50 000 fine
sanofi-aventis	Copaxone (glatiramer)	Promotional material	\$25 000 fine Withdraw material Corrective letter
	Clexane (enoxaparin)	Promotional material	Corrective letter
Schering Plough	Olmotec (olmesartan)	Promotional material	\$35 000 fine Withdraw material
Servier	Coversyl (perindopril)	Promotional material	\$100 000 fine Withdraw material Corrective letter (Requirement for corrective advertisement removed on appeal)