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Empowering Your Patients Toward Wellness

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In order to be natural health and wellness practitioners in our communities, we need to continuously educate our patients. Part of that education involves making them aware of the politics and propaganda perpetuated by the media as it relates to health care - particularly the pharmaceutical industry. One example is the escalating number of drug advertisements appearing in magazines, newspapers and airing on the radio and television. According to Tonda R. Bian, author of *The Drug Lords: America's Pharmaceutical Cartel;*" there is a political "leg up" the industry enjoys, thanks to the golden triad: politics, propaganda and the press. It is a one that allows the drug and medical industries a huge edge in the health care market.

According to the author, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the National Mental Health Association operate under the guise of objectivity, even though they each serve as mouthpieces for medicine. Virtually all one of these organizations receive financial support from the medical industry, although every president, CEO and director of any one of these organizations will deny any conflict of interest exists. The author of *Drug Lords* continues to point out that during the researching of her book she came across countless other examples of this practice, including:

1. Ciba Geigy played a significant role in the development of specific educational materials surrounding the issue of children with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The common treatment is Ritalin, manufactured by Ciba Geigy. In a mid-1990s television special, a report questioned the drug manufacturer's donation to CHADD, a support group for ADD and ADHD sufferers and their families. Geigy donated \$800,000 to the organization. CHADD literature, in turn, demonstrated an overwhelming support for Ritalin in the treatment of ADD. Ciba Geigy has also enjoyed government support in the form of a U.S. Department of Education video that evidenced strong support of Ritalin for the same disorders in spite of Ritalin's known side effects, including addiction.

2. Eli Lilly sponsored a promotional campaign designed to reach 93 percent of American adults.

According to a Wall Street Journal article (April 15, 1993), Eli Lilly paid between \$3-4 million for a National Mental Health Association (NMHA) three-week promotional blitz. The goal was to encourage the public to seek professional help for depression. Eli Lilly, the manufacturer of Prozac, also gave the NMHA nonprofit organization \$500,000 to conduct a nine-month public education program to identify potential candidates for treatment of depression.

The close relationship between the press and medicine has been a long-growing trend of two types:

1. editorial content slanted to please advertisers;
2. editorial that is not necessarily slanted to their advertisers, but based on the assumption that the medical profession is selfless and altruistic; that what comes from the mouth of medicine is for the common good, and therefore must be correct.

The collaboration of advertising revenue loyalty and naïveté explains why the media often report what medicine feeds them, via news releases repeated verbatim, with little scrutiny or objective analysis. As wellness practitioners, we must make this type of information available to our patients in order to empower them to make better informed health choices. It will help them understand why they should be seeking natural and wellness *care*. And we don't need politics, propaganda and the press to convince them because what we do works!

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