Reviewer's report

Title: Advertising and disclosure of funding on patient organisation websites: a cross-sectional survey

Version: 1 Date: 30 May 2006

Reviewer: David Henry

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General
This study addresses an important issue: the extent of which patient organisations receive funding from the corporate world, in particular pharmaceutical companies, and the extent of which this is made clear through their websites and annual reports to their members and to the public generally.

In my view the authors have carried out a very substantial piece of work using a thorough methodology and with results that are well reported and are a good basis for the recommendations that they make later in their paper.

I have very few critical comments to make about this paper, which is one of the best I've read on the topic. The following comments can be regarded as fairly minor:

1. I think this paper may have a substantial impact in its likely to be circulated widely amongst patient organisations. Consequently, I think the authors should take the opportunity to spell out in detail the consequences of patient organisations becoming too close to commercial funding sources. For instance in my experience patient support groups often lobby for subsidised access to new health technologies. This is completely understandable and quite appropriate except that in a number of instances the organisations have weakened their stance by becoming very close to the organisations that sponsor the products.

2. The only weak part of this manuscript really is the abstract. Because the abstract is the part of a document that is guaranteed to be read they should try to put more information into it. The abstract is rather thin on data and I think it could spell out more clearly their results. In addition the authors have come up with some excellent policy recommendations and I think that these should be reproduced in the abstract in as much detail as space allows.

In conclusion I think this is an important paper that needs to be published and needs very few changes made to it.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)