Reviewer's report

Title: Impacts of Pharmaceutical Promotion On Prescribing Decisions of General Practitioners

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2006

Reviewer: Richard Kravitz

Reviewer's report:

General
The study is a self-administered survey of 152 general practitioners working in a single province of Eastern Turkey. Physicians were asked about the perceived influence of drug marketing on their prescribing decisions. The topic would likely be of interest to readers in North America as well as internationally as it reflects the global reach of pharmaceutical marketing. However, at this point, insufficient information is provided to make a serious judgment about the rigor and validity of the methods.

Strengths of the study include the importance of the topic and the implications for global health. Weaknesses include lack of a conceptual model, poorly described methods, relatively small sample size, and lack of evidence that the measures are reliable or valid.

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

1. An abstract should be created according to journal guidelines.
2. More information is needed on the sampling strategy, response rate, and survey methods. What constituted the target population? How many doctors were on the target list? The reported response rate (97%) is almost unbelievable. How did the authors obtain such a robust response?
3. More information is needed on the exact questions that were asked of the physicians. Also, is there any evidence for the reliability or validity of the measures?

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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)

1. Please indicate how the data in Table 1 were generated. For example, how did you calculate the "number of mean patient examinated [sic] in one day"?
2. Please change title of Table 2 to something more informative, e.g. Participation of GPs in post-graduate drug education programs."
3. On the top of p.3, it is unclear what it means to be "always affected from promotional activities of drug companies." In the next paragraph, please clarify the meaning of "increasing postgraduate years of medical degree." And at the bottom of the page, what does the first sentence in the last paragraph mean? ("In this study, the pharmaceutical industry was the main provider of drug information to GPs, which a lack of postgraduate medical education for GPs in Turkey.")

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Declaration of competing interests:

I have some research grants from Pfizer related to my work on heterogeneity of treatment effects. It is conceivable that by shining a bad light on drug marketing, this paper could hurt Pfizer or other drug companies.