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Dear colleague

## Evolving the relationship between the medical community and the pharmaceutical industry

On 1st January 2011, important changes to the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) Code of Practice took place. We would like to draw your attention to some of the key changes:

- The industry will no longer provide branded promotional aids, such as pens, pads and mugs to health professionals. This will take effect from 1st May 2011. Some companies have already made this change and others may do so ahead of this date.
- From 2012, companies will be required to collect and declare on an annual basis aggregate total amounts paid to health professionals and others for certain services such as speaker fees and participation in advisory boards. Similarly companies will be required to declare sponsorship for attendance at meetings organised by third parties. The first declaration of payments will be in 2013 for payments made in 2012. The Code does not require individual health professionals to be named but does require the total number of health professionals involved to be declared and the total number of meeting attendances sponsored.

These changes have been made by the industry following extensive consultation with stakeholder organisations representing the NHS, patient groups, health professionals and industry and have received strong support.

The changes aim to support greater openness and transparency in the relationship between the industry and health professionals, something that our stakeholders in the medical profession, wider healthcare and across industry have told us that they want.

In 2008 the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) published the 'Innovating for Health' report calling on the ABPI to "change its Code of Practice to bring to an end the practice of industry representatives giving gifts to doctors and their support staff. Acting on this single recommendation alone would do much to rebalance the relationship between medicine and industry"<sup>1</sup>. Since publication of the report, the RCP and ABPI have been working together through a multi-stakeholder forum to examine issues and identify best practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Innovating for Health, Royal College of Physicians, 2008

Whilst these changes to the Code will not in themselves address all the challenges of ensuring that the relationship between health professionals and the industry continues to meet the high expectations of our stakeholders and society, they are strong symbolic indicators of change and will help to address some common criticisms that are made of how we work with each other.

By tackling some of these criticisms, we can together continue to evolve the relationship between industry and the medical profession, based on high standards of transparency and good practice. This is crucial to all of us: crucial for future collaboration, joint working and partnerships; for the continued trust and confidence of patients and stakeholders in health; and ultimately for better health outcomes for patients.

As partners in the healthcare system, we consider these changes to be significant in strengthening the relationship between health professionals and the industry. We commend the changes to you and hope you will strongly support their implementation in your own clinical setting.

Further details on the changes to the Code can be found at the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority website at [www.pmcpa.org.uk](http://www.pmcpa.org.uk).


Yours faithfully,



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ABPI



**Sir Richard Thompson**  
President  
Royal College of Physicians



**Dr Tony Jewell**  
Chief Medical Officer  
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