



FOUNDED BY BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL
AND MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

For immediate release April 10, 2009

Contact:
Rich Copp
(617) 278-1031

Partners HealthCare to Implement New Industry Interaction Recommendations
Banning of Gifts, More Robust Policies, Oversight, and Sanctions Among Highlights

BOSTON, MA – Partners HealthCare today announced that it will be implementing the recommendations of an internal commission charged with examining the health system's policies and practices for interacting with pharmaceutical and medical device companies and other vendors.

The recommendations, developed by the physician-led Partners Commission on Interactions with Industry and endorsed by the Partners HealthCare Board of Directors, tighten many current policies, introduce several new policies, and call for a renewed and rigorous institutional commitment to education, oversight, and enforcement. Over the coming months, Partners will be developing a comprehensive implementation plan to ensure optimal compliance with these policies.

In addition to the Commission's work, Partners HealthCare has devoted considerable attention over the past two years to enhancing its conflict of interest disclosure process in three major ways: disclosures are now reported and analyzed online; significant focus has been placed on ensuring that disclosures are submitted and reviewed in a timely manner; and required participation has been expanded to include more than 6,000 physicians, researchers, institutional officers, and other employees. For individuals who fail to comply with this or any other institutional policy, Partners has sanctions in place, through the bylaws of its hospitals.

“As times change and the relationships between health care organizations and industry become more complex, our policies in these areas and our oversight of them must evolve,” said James J. Mongan, M.D., President and CEO of Partners HealthCare. “Relationships with industry are fundamentally important for translating scientific advances into patient care improvements, but they must be managed in a way that assures the actual – and perceived – integrity of our research, education, and patient care activities.”

The Commission, which was formed by Dr. Mongan in the fall of 2007, was comprised of physician leaders from across the Partners system. Initially chaired by Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., Partners Chief Academic Officer, who left in the summer of 2008 to become President of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, the Commission continued its work under the leadership of Eugene Braunwald, M.D., a founding Partners trustee and former Partners Chief Academic Officer.

The Commission was asked to address four general areas: formulating principles to guide Partners approach to industry interactions; reviewing Partners current range of relationships with industry; considering the potential need for changes in policies and practices; and developing recommendations regarding modifications to policies, the need for new policies and practices, and the infrastructure required to better support and enforce all activity in this area.

The following are among the Commission's key recommendations:

- Prohibition of all gifts, including meals and funding for meals, provided directly to staff by industry for their personal use, on a Partners site or off site. This ban also applies to Partners institutions accepting industry gifts for this purpose.
- Development of mechanisms to have free drug samples distributed only through the hospital pharmacy or some other centralized system, and not provided directly to or distributed by physicians.
- Requiring that industry representatives have written invitations defining the purpose and terms of visits before having access to Partners sites and staff.
- Establishment of a process to identify and manage significant financial interests held by physicians in companies that make products they prescribe or use in their practices.
- Acceptance of industry funding for educational programs and fellowships only if provided through a centrally pooled institutional President's Fund at each hospital or approved by a newly-created, Partners-wide Educational Review Board.
- Establishment of a robust, tiered approach to evaluate research-related conflicts of interest, including continued prohibition of certain high-risk circumstances.
- Adoption of a stricter policy holding certain officials to a higher standard because of their influential positions within the organization.
- Strengthened oversight of permitted outside activities, including a ban on faculty participation in industry speakers bureaus, an express prohibition on faculty being listed as authors on papers ghostwritten by others, and a more rigorous internal review process for certain outside activities.

- Development of an enhanced infrastructure, including creation of a new Conflict of Interest Review Committee, responsible for education, oversight, and enforcement of Partners policies and practices in regard to industry interactions.

“Working with industry is essential to fulfilling our academic mission, but we have to do it in a way that removes potential bias and preserves the public trust in our institutions,” said Dr. Braunwald.

“These guidelines both recognize the importance of industry relationships while spelling out how to eliminate the appearance of conflict of interest.”

President and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Darrell G. Kirch, M.D. applauded the work of the Partners Commission calling the recommendations "a serious and comprehensive step forward in the rapidly evolving arena of medicine and its relationship with industry."

While the recommendations will be implemented in phases, the goal is to have most of them take effect as of October 1, 2009, the beginning of Partners new fiscal year. Partners has appointed a task force, chaired by Peter Slavin, M.D., President of Massachusetts General Hospital, to ensure prompt implementation and successful rollout. This process will include system-wide educational initiatives, dedication of financial resources, and definition of sanctions for non-compliance.

“The Commission has crafted a thoughtful and comprehensive set of recommendations and offered a useful guide to developing important relationships with industry that are constructive and principled,” said Dr. Slavin. “Our implementation effort will aim to put the policies into practice deliberately and expeditiously. We can and will do that, and when we do, I believe we will have a set of policies and processes that will serve as a model for others.”

Partners has been coordinating its review efforts with those of Harvard Medical School and Harvard University. Officials from Harvard have been involved in the Partners review process, and senior leaders from Partners are involved in the HMS review of its policies, which is in the early stages.

[Read Full Commission Report](#)

Partners HealthCare is an integrated health system founded by Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital. In addition to its two academic medical centers, the Partners system includes community and specialty hospitals, community health centers, a physician network, home health and long-term care services, and other health-related entities. Partners is one of the

nation's leading biomedical research organizations and a principal teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School. Partners HealthCare is a non-profit organization.

####