

## LETTERS

## TACKLING CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

## Collaboration with industry facilitates useful research that wouldn't happen otherwise

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I have worked in functional gastroenterology for over 30 years and could not have published over 300 papers, articles, and chapters without the support of the pharmaceutical industry.<sup>1</sup> To obtain a grant towards research in my field was impossible until very recently, the only alternative being to collaborate with industry and use any money left over to fund more innovative work. This policy has enabled me to publish a broad range of clinical studies which, at the risk of sounding pretentious, have significantly contributed to current thinking about irritable bowel syndrome, not to mention original work on applying hypnotherapy in gastroenterology.

I still see over 600 new patients a year with complex functional gastroenterological problems, as well as follow-up appointments, and it would be a shame if someone with this wealth of clinical experience was denied the opportunity to share this with decision makers.

I have, of course, come across some unfortunate practices from certain pharmaceutical companies, but most are now cleaning up their act, almost to excess. I have also gone to extreme lengths to maintain my integrity, mainly by dealing with the

research and development arm rather than the marketing arm of companies, although this is not always possible.

Funding is comparatively plentiful for the more “sexy” areas of research, but please spare a thought for those of us in Cinderella specialties, who have no alternative but to be a little less choosy about how we maintain our momentum.

Competing interests: PJW has served as an advisory board member or received research funding from the following pharmaceutical companies: Novartis Pharmaceuticals, GlaxoSmithKline, Solvay Pharmaceuticals, Pfizer Global Research and Development, Rotta Research, Proctor and Gamble, Danone Research, Astellas Pharma, Ironwood Pharmaceuticals, Sucampo Pharmaceuticals, Almirall Pharma, Movetis UK, Norgine and Chr Hansen, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Heel GMBH.

1 Godlee F. Turning the tide on conflicts of interest [Editor's choice]. *BMJ* 2011;343:d5147. (10 August.)

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