In 1995, Drs. Eric Campbell and David Blumenthal surveyed academic life scientists about their relationships with industry. Through their research, they found that those scientists with industry support, (28 percent) were significantly more productive than those without such support. However, industry-funded scientists were significantly more likely to engage in secrecy related to their industrial research. This study and subsequent follow-on studies set the benchmark for longitudinal tracking of the frequency, benefits, and risks of industry support in academic research. The findings of Dr. Campbell and his collaborators at the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) provided the first empirical data showing that institutional relationships are ubiquitous even among the nation’s medical schools and teaching hospitals. Two papers from this pioneering research formed the empirical backbone of AAMC’s report on institutional conflict of interest (ICOI).

One particular form of institutional industry relationship that has been viewed as highly problematic involves members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the formal organizational structure that reviews and approves studies involving human research subjects. In 2009, Dr. Campbell published an article in Academic Medicine reporting on a survey of academic IRB members. His study found that 25 percent of academic IRBs did not have a defined process for members to report their industry relationships. Further, this study found that 35 percent of IRB members with ties to industry voted on protocols supported by the firms with which they had a financial relationship. This study clearly demonstrated that improved policies and procedures were needed for managing industry relationships among IRB members in the academic setting.

Policy and Impact

Two years prior, Dr. Campbell had examined the frequency with which practicing physicians had relationships with industry. This study found that almost all physicians (94 percent) have some type of industrial relationship, and 35 percent received reimbursement for costs associated with professional meetings or continuing medical education. This research helped motivate calls...
for a national system for disclosing physician payments, which led to the enactment of the “Physician Payments Sunshine Act” (S. 301) as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148).

By 2010 Dr. Campbell’s research showed that the percentage of physicians accepting medication samples decreased significantly—from 78 percent in 2004 to 63 percent in 2009. Likewise, the percentage of physicians accepting gifts decreased from 83 percent to 72 percent, as did those accepting reimbursements from drug companies (33 to 18 percent) and other industry payments (28 to 14 percent). Overall, the percentage of physicians with any type of industry relationship in the previous year decreased significantly from 94 to 84 percent. There are many factors that likely contributed to these declines, but new policies relating to physician-industry relationships may have been one particularly influential factor.

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