

What does the new pharmaceutical policy entail? (Refer to URMIC Gifts Policy Draft and URMIC Gifts FAQ)

- URMIC providers, including medical students, may not accept pharmaceutical gifts of any kind (such as pens, pads, textbooks, or food).
- Other important aspects include:
 - Pharmaceutical representatives are not allowed in URMIC affiliated hospitals and care centers, except in rare circumstances (i.e. reps providing training for devices or other equipment).
 - Scholarship or other educational funds must be provided to URMIC, not directly to students.
 - Material contributions or financial support supplied by industry to providers and/or researchers must be disclosed in any presentations, articles, or papers.
 - All students will receive appropriate training regarding potential conflicts of interest in interactions with industry.

Why was this policy created at URMIC?

- When we take gifts from pharmaceutical companies, we are betraying our obligation to our patients.
 - The doctor-patient relationship, unlike other “business relationships,” is a fiduciary relationship.
 - This means that public faith is placed in physicians, and patients expect their physician to act in their best interest.
- There is a clear conflict of interest that results from healthcare providers receiving gifts from pharmaceutical companies.¹
 - A conflict of interest refers to a situation that creates the possibility, either actual or perceived, that a professional may provide a judgment or take an action motivated by something other than the interests or well-being of a patient.
 - Taking gifts from pharmaceutical companies compromises a healthcare providers’ ability to act objectively to meet their patients’ needs.
 - Physicians who receive gifts from pharmaceutical reps, partly through the feelings of obligation they engender,^{2,3} are likely to alter their prescribing behavior.
 - These physicians are more likely to request the inclusion of the company's drugs on hospital formularies, more likely to prescribe the company's products, and less likely to prescribe generic medications.
 - The resulting changes in the use of medication are often more costly and "nonrational" in that the newly prescribed or requested drugs have no therapeutic advantage over the alternatives.⁴
- While we cannot prescribe medications as medical students, if we develop a pattern of taking pharmaceutical gifts now – of creating inappropriate relationships with drug companies – we will be compromising our ability to act in the best interest of our future patients.

References:

1. Brennan TA, et al. Health Industry Practices That Create Conflicts of Interest: A Policy Proposal for Academic Medical Centers. JAMA. 2006; 295(4):429-433.
2. Blumenthal D. Doctors and Drug Companies. NEJM. 2004; 83(4):407-8.
3. Katz D, Caplan AL, Merz JF. All gifts large and small: toward an understanding of the ethics of pharmaceutical industry gift-giving. Am J Bioeth. 2003;3:39-46.
4. Wazana A. Physicians and the pharmaceutical industry: is a gift ever just a gift? JAMA. 2000; 283:373-380.