Practice patterns of US neurologists in patients with SPMS and PPMS: A consensus study

William J. Weiner, MD, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore: Conflict of interest and disclosure policies remain an important and difficult topic for journals. Companion surveys describing practice patterns of US neurologists with regard to treatment choices in patients with various forms of multiple sclerosis recently published in *Neurology: Clinical Practice* highlight this issue.[1,2] Is a disclosure declaration sufficient to permit publication of studies that are sponsored entirely by pharmaceutical companies or do journals have an editorial responsibility to reject such articles? The disclosure statement regarding study funding for these 2 articles revealed that Biogen Idec "convened a steering committee to develop the contents of this article and paid committee members for their participation." This raises the question of why Biogen Idec selected these particular neurologists to be the steering committee. The authors reveal that the company reviewed drafts of the manuscript and had input into the development of the surveys, the manuscript, and provided feedback on the manuscript.

These 2 articles could confidently be labeled advertisements and perhaps that is what a journal should do in such cases. We certainly do not need additional published articles that are conceived by the pharmaceutical company, paid for by the pharmaceutical company, and edited by the pharmaceutical company.

Disclosures: Dr. Weiner served on the scientific advisory boards for Santhera and Rexahn, is an editor for *Current Treatment Options in Neurology*, is on the editorial board for *Parkinsonism and Related Disorders*, receives royalties from Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Elsevier, and Hopkins Press, and has provided expert defense testimony.

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Most phase II and III pharmaceutical clinical trials have protocols written by the commercial sponsor that typically convenes steering and manuscript committee. Should these clinical trials and related manuscripts be discarded because they constitute "paid advertisements"? Dr. Weiner himself is a coauthor on a recently published commercially sponsored study in which employees of the sponsor participated in the design, data analysis, and manuscript writing.[3] Transparency, full disclosure, peer review, and avoidance of bias remain critical to scientific publications regardless of the funding sources.

Study funding: Biogen Idec convened a Steering Committee to develop the content of this article and paid committee members for their participation. In addition, Biogen Idec paid honoraria for survey participation and provided funding

for study logistics and editorial support. Biogen Idec reviewed drafts and had input into the development of the surveys, reviewed the manuscript, and provided feedback on the manuscript to the authors. The authors had full editorial control of the surveys and manuscript and provided their final approval of all content.

Disclosures: Dr. Khan has received funding for travel or speaker honoraria from Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Novartis, and Biogen Idec; serves as a consultant for Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Novartis, Biogen Idec, Merck Serono, Roche, and Genzyme Corporation; serves on speakers' bureaus for Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Novartis, Genzyme Corporation, and Biogen Idec; and receives research support from Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Novartis, Biogen Idec, Genzyme Corporation, Roche, the NIH, and the National MS Society. Dr. Miller serves on scientific advisory boards for sanofi-aventis, Biogen Idec, GlaxoSmithKline, EMD Serono, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Daiichi Sankyo, Merck Serono, Novartis, Ono Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd., and Acorda Therapeutics; serves as a consultant for Acorda Therapeutics, Biogen Idec, CVS Caremark, GlaxoSmithKline, and Novartis; serves on the editorial board of *Continuum*; has received speaker honoraria from Merck Serono and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.; receives/has received research support from Acorda Therapeutics, Novartis, Genzyme Corporation, sanofi-aventis, and Biogen Idec; and has reviewed medico-legal cases as a defense expert. Dr. Tornatore serves on speakers' bureaus for Biogen Idec and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.; serves on scientific advisory boards for Biogen Idec and Novartis; and receives research support from Biogen Idec. Dr. Phillips serves as a consultant and on scientific advisory boards for and has received speaker honoraria from Acorda Therapeutics Inc., Biogen Idec, Genzyme Corporation, Novartis, and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. Dr. Barnes is an employee of Infusion Communications, which received funding from Biogen Idec.

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Editors' Note

Neurology® and *Neurology*® *Clinical Practice* require full disclosure from authors because we want readers to be able to judge for themselves whether there is a conflict of interest that could bias the material presented. The Editors strive for objectivity, aided by rigorous peer review, which assures best practices in reporting science. Transparent reporting of conflicts of interest, combined with peer and editorial review, are, in the end, the best defense against bias.[1–3]

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