

# JULIA SCHOPICK

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## MY COMMENTS -- USING MY JAMA CONTROVERSY ARTICLE

I suggest that you read the posting to which I am responding, before reading my comment.

### BLOG POSTING TO WHICH I AM RESPONDING IS HERE:

<http://www.healthimperia.com/article/Prof: Doctors Must Not be Lapdogs to Drug Firms>

In these comments, I have highlighted (in yellow) the sections that pertain to HonestMedicine's "JAMA Controversy" article. (The original article may be found at <http://301url.com/jama-all>.)

### MY COMMENT:

I am so glad you reported on Adriane Fugh-Berman's BMJ article: It does an excellent job of exposing the unfortunate attitudes of pharmaceutical company executives who view "all transactions with physicians in finely calculated financial terms."

Of course, I find her assertions upsetting: I believe them to be true. I decided to go on the British Medical Journal's site to read what some doctors had to say about her article (see <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/eletters/333/7576/1027>), and frankly, I found some of their responses to be equally upsetting -- especially that of Dr. Peter Lavine, who states that Dr. Fugh-Berman's article is "dramatic and misleading," and that the problem she writes about is "imaginary."

This is hardly true. What Dr. Lavine fails to mention is that he has been widely quoted in the press as favoring sponsorships by pharmaceutical companies. In addition, he downplays the effects gifts and meals provided by pharmaceutical companies have on doctors. In a September, 2004 "American Medical News" article ("D.C. surgeon touts own ideas for reform, gifts"), Dr. Lavine downplays the roles these gifts play when he is quoted as saying, "I don't think people are going to change their practice parameters over a couple of steak dinners. . . ."

The problem Dr. Fugh-Berman is writing about is not imaginary. Pharmaceutical companies encourage many kinds of financial ties between physicians and themselves. The recent flap that resulted over the fact that the Journal of the AMA (JAMA) published the results of studies whose physician/authors had financial ties to relevant drug companies is just one example. My 3-part article, "The JAMA Controversy" -- see



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<http://301url.com/jama-all> -- provides lots of information about that scandal. And, my site also contains links to several articles that point to similar financial ties. (Please see the links on the left side of my site, [www.honestmedicine.com](http://www.honestmedicine.com), under "CANCER" and "Pharmaceutical Companies.")

So, no, Dr. Fugh-Berman is hardly imagining the problem. She is just reporting it. And doctors would do well to listen to her.

Julia Schopick  
Medical Advocate  
<http://www.honestmedicine.com>

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### **BLOG POSTING TO WHICH I AM RESPONDING IS HERE:**

<http://gotnoise.blogspot.com/2006/11/light-candle.html#comments> – encouraging people to light a candle. Bristol-Myers Squibb will donate \$1 up to \$100,000 to the National AIDS fund. You can also make a further donation while on the website.

### **MY COMMENT:**

At Sun Nov 26, 02:09:00 PM PST, Julia Schopick said...

I can't help but be frustrated when I read about yet another pharmaceutical company donating to "the cause" -- in this case to an AIDS organization. There has been so much written about how self-serving some pharmaceutical companies are, but people just don't seem to "get it."

For instance, did you know that the studies that are done on drugs are very often paid for by the pharmaceutical companies that developed the drugs? AND, when pharmaceutical companies pay for the "research," the "findings" most often "prove" that the drugs are effective.

It is such a big problem. But if you will visit my website, <http://www.honestmedicine.typepad.com>, you will find many articles attesting to the unhealthy financial ties between pharmaceutical companies and the physicians who "study" their drugs; and between the pharmaceutical companies and the organizations who are supposed to be advocating for patients. (Please go to the left side of my site, where you will find lots of these articles, under "CANCER" and "Pharmaceutical Companies.")

And for a really shocking exposé of how the "Journal of the American Medical Association" (JAMA) published articles about studies whose physician/authors failed to disclose their financial ties to relevant pharmaceutical companies, please see my 3-part article, "The JAMA Controversy," at <http://301url.com/jama-all>.

I wish I knew what the answer was, but I don't. I just know that the more the public knows, the wiser they will become!

And by the way, do you know how LITTLE \$100,000 is to a company like this? It's a drop in the bucket -- and look at the great PR they get!

Thanks.

## **BLOG POSTING TO WHICH I AM RESPONDING:**

<http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2006/11/348764.shtml>

Pharmaceutical Commercials - Off the Airwaves!

## **MY COMMENT**

Julia Schopick

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[link](#)

What a wonderful article! I have seen the Jarvik ads on television, but had forgotten about Dr. Jarvik's questionable history. I'll bet most of those who view the ad don't have a clue, either. But, as you so adeptly infer at the end of your article, pharmaceutical companies must be lying to us about lots of things. This is the most frightening part.

You may be interested in reading a 3-part article I wrote for my website, [www.honestmedicine.com](http://www.honestmedicine.com), entitled "The JAMA Controversy," in which I elaborate on the flak that ensued after the "Wall Street Journal" revealed that the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) had published a study whose authors had serious financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry. Although there is not enough space here to give more examples of similar financial ties, I can refer you to several excellent websites. Just a few are: <http://www.thehealthcareblog.com/>, <http://the-whistleblower-by-peter-rost.blogspot.com/> and <http://scientific-misconduct.blogspot.com/>.

I hope you will visit them. The information they provide will enlighten. In addition, several of the links on the left-hand side of my site -- especially the links under "PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES" and "CANCER" back up your assertions about pharmaceutical company corruption, as does my JAMA article, which can be found at <http://301url.com/jama-all> Again, thanks for your wonderful article. I wish more publications would expose this problem. Julia Schopick  
<http://www.honestmedicine.typepad.com>

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## **BLOG POSTING:**

<http://hcrenewal.blogspot.com/2006/12/nih-leader-indicted-for-criminal.html>

NIH Leader Indicted for "Criminal Conflict of Interest" for his Relationship with Pfizer Inc.

## **MY COMMENT**

- Dr. Poses:

Thanks so much for your wonderful blog!

The recent news about the NIMH's Dr. Sunderland, though extremely sad, almost seems like "business as usual" to me. In light of all the other medical "conflict of interest" stories that abound these days, I don't find this one to be particularly shocking. What I do find shocking is the statement on the Physorg.org forum ([www.physorg.com/news84857663.html](http://www.physorg.com/news84857663.html)) that "NIH officials said more than 40 scientists were thought to have engaged in outside, fee-based relationships with private companies.

Most were disciplined internally or retired, agency officials said.”

My goodness.

What I think is really shocking and very sad — at least to me — is that, even after the public is informed about these unholy alliances among Big Pharm, physicians, and government officials, the public continues — incredibly -- to trust all three groups.

How many exposés do we have to read before we finally “get it”? Is the mainstream media so tied to Big Pharma that they don’t give these exposés proper follow-up?

I had hoped that the public would finally wake up after the flurry of media activity resulting from David Armstrong’s excellent 2-part exposé (at [http://301url.com/wsj\\_jama1](http://301url.com/wsj_jama1) and [http://301url.com/wsj\\_jama2](http://301url.com/wsj_jama2)) in the “Wall Street Journal” this past summer. As you know, in these articles, Mr. Armstrong exposed the fact that the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) had published articles about pharmaceutical studies whose physician/authors had serious financial ties to the drug industry — financial ties which they had failed to disclose. Particularly disturbing to me was that fact that, when confronted, these physician/researchers didn’t seem to understand the reasons WHY they should have disclosed their financial ties.

I was so struck by this that I wrote a 3-part article, “The JAMA Controversy” (<http://301url.com/jama-all>), for my blog/website, [www.honestmedicine.com](http://www.honestmedicine.com), in which I also expanded on one of the many very important disclosures made by Mr. Armstrong: that JAMA actually used slick, professionally produced Video News Releases (VNRs, or “fake news”) to publicize its now-controversial studies. (VNRs, used routinely by pharmaceutical companies, are in themselves extremely controversial.)

Yet, stories of these kinds of conflicts of interest and financial ties keep coming. Even the CDC has been implicated recently (<http://www.ajc.com/news/content/metro/stories/2006/12/02/1203meshcdccontract.html>). The list goes on.

As you well know, there are some wonderful blogs and websites -- like this one -- that keep up on these stories, so the news is “out there.” But in my opinion, mainstream media doesn’t do as good a job — probably because they are beholden to the pharmaceutical industry for advertising revenue.

Some of the other websites and blogs that I think do an excellent job of informing the public about these conflicts of interest include: The Health Care Blog at [www.thehealthcareblog.com](http://www.thehealthcareblog.com); the Alliance for Human Research Protection’s (AHRP) website and blog at [www.ahrp.org/](http://www.ahrp.org/) and [www.ahrp.blogspot.com](http://www.ahrp.blogspot.com); Scientific Misconduct at <http://scientific-misconduct.blogspot.com/>; Gooznews at [www.gooznews.com](http://www.gooznews.com); Pharmagossip at <http://pharmagossip.blogspot.com/>; Healthy Skepticism at [www.healthyskepticism.org/](http://www.healthyskepticism.org/); Kevin MD at [www.kevinmd.com](http://www.kevinmd.com); and Pharmawatch at <http://pharmawatch.blogspot.com/>. And, in addition to my article, “The JAMA Controversy,” mentioned above, my blog/website, [www.honestmedicine.com](http://www.honestmedicine.com), has lots of articles on that detail these kinds financial ties and conflicts of interest.

Hopefully, more people will go online for their information. But as of now, we as a society seem to continue to trust these people and organizations that simply do not deserve our trust.

Thank you.

Julia Schopick

<http://www.honestmedicine.typepad.com>

By Julia Schopick, at 3:24 PM \_