

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF PHYSICIAN-INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIP IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Background: Relationships between physicians and pharmaceutical & other medically related industries have received considerable attention in recent years. We surveyed physicians all around Saudi Arabia (SA) to collect information about their knowledge, behaviors and attitudes regarding their relationships with the industry.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey that used a 47-item, anonymous, self-administered questionnaire, was sent to all accessible doctors in SA. The questionnaire was developed based on literature review, discussed between authors and reviewed by experts. The survey

Results: 600 doctors (physicians and surgeons), 15% of them were psychiatrists who filled in the survey. Preliminary results of only 15% of the total sample indicated that 40.9% (n=38) of participants have encountered a pharmaceutical company representatives (PRs) at least once in their life. Psychiatrists were among the top specialties in accepting gifts and promotions presented to them by PRs. 4.3% (n=4) of participants mentioned that PRs almost always offer a gift and promotion after every meeting. The most frequently mentioned gifts presented to participants by PRs are stationary such as pens or notepads (26.9%). Although 60.2% (n=56) of participants had been educated about the ethics in physician industry relationships, 34.4% of participants accept gifts and promotions presented to them by PRs.

The final results of this study will be ready by Feb 2013. It will be presented fully in the EPA 2013.

Conclusions: The results of this survey indicate that relationships between physicians and industry are common and underscore the variation among such relationships according to specialty, practice type, and professional activities.