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PAYMENTS TO RADIO HOST

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, several years ago, I started looking at the financial relationships between physicians and drug companies. I am doing this because I am concerned that there is very little transparency on this issue. I have also learned that the little transparency that does exist is not being enforced or is being enforced inconsistently.

For instance, the National Institutes of Health requires researchers to report outside payments to their institution if they receive a grant from the NIH. But I have learned that some researchers are failing to properly report this money.

Recently, I examined payments from pharmaceutical companies to a professor of psychiatry at the University of Cincinnati. I found out that she was not reporting tens of thousand of dollars in outside income.

I then looked at a group of the world's most prominent child psychiatrists, in particular, three researchers at Harvard who have taken millions of dollars from the drug companies. These doctors are funded by several NIH grants, but they were not reporting all of their money from the drug companies as required by NIH regulations.

I then discovered a department chairman at Stanford who founded a company that was seeking approval from the Food and Drug Administration to market a drug for depression. The NIH is funding some research on this drug which was being led by this same Stanford scientist. Because there were some obvious conflicts with this situation, the NIH recently forced Stanford to pull this professor off the grant.

I also sent letters to the University of Texas and Emory University about researchers at their institutions.

I would now like to discuss another troubling aspect about the lack of financial transparency in medicine.

"The Infinite Mind" is a radio show that is independently produced but runs on over 300 public radio stations. It is possibly the most authoritative program on psychology and neuroscience in America. This show has won over 60 journalism awards. According to a biography of the show's host, it has an audience of over half a million people.

Back in my home State of Iowa, ``The Infinite Mind" is broadcast on most Sundays, early in the evening. My guess is that thousands of lowans tune in. According to its own website, ``The Infinite Mind" prides itself on its ``independence." But there may be some problems with their financial transparency.

Last May, a couple of reporters for a news site called ``Slate" wrote about an episode of ``The Infinite Mind" called Prozac Nation: Revisited. During this episode, three guests on the show discussed problems with antidepressants. After listening to a recording of the show, it appeared to me that the real effect of this particular episode was to undercut any criticism that antidepressants might be linked to an increased risk of suicide. This is an issue I tackled a few years back.

Maybe these three guests felt that there really is no problem with antidepressants. But a large number of experts believe that antidepressants may be associated with an increased risk of suicide, particularly in kids. In fact, last March, two months before this show aired, Britain's Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority MHRA, concluded a 4 year investigation of the antidepressant, Paxil. That report found that GSK had been aware since 1998 that Paxil was associated with a higher risk of suicidal behavior in adolescents.

Now don't get me wrong, experts on public radio have a right to express their own opinions. However, I am concerned that the host of ``The Infinite Mind" never pointed out that all three of the show's guests had strong financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

That is right. Every one of them. And this was never mentioned during the program or by the guests who appeared.

What listeners also never learned is that the host of ``The Infinite Mind" has his own ties to drugmakers. When a show runs on National Public Radio, NPR, doesn't the public have a right to know where the show's host gets his money?

The host of ``The Infinite Mind" is Dr. Frederick Goodwin, who I am told, is one of our country's leading experts on bipolar disorder. In fact, he has written the definitive textbook on bipolar disorder. He is now an adjunct professor at George Washington University Medical Center and was formerly the director of the National Institute of Mental Health.

But what you would never know about Dr. Goodwin is that he is also a paid spokesman for several drug companies. Now, I don't know how much money Dr. Goodwin actually receives from all the drug companies, but based on documents my office has received from GlaxoSmithKline, I do know that GlaxoSmithKline pays him around \$2500 for every talk he gives on treatments for bipolar disorder and depression. These talks concerned several drugs such as Wellbutrin, Eskalith, and Lamictal.

Based on documents that my office received from GlaxoSmithKline, Dr. Goodwin gives these talks to doctor groups around the country. So far this year, Glaxo reports that the company paid Dr. Goodwin over \$130,000 for over 50 different talks. Of course, Dr. Goodwin may be making more money from other drug companies, but I only asked GlaxoSmithKline for their information. I do know from a scientific paper that Dr. Goodwin published that he has also given talks on behalf of Pfizer, Solvay, Janssen, Eli Lilly, Astra Zeneca and Bristol Myers Squibb. And he has served as a consultant for many of these companies, as well.

In fact, Dr. Goodwin was very busy the week that the episode of Prozac Nation: Revisited started airing last March 26. GlaxoSmithKline's records show that the company paid Dr. Goodwin for several talks he gave that week on bipolar disorder and Lamictal. In fact, records show that he gave around eight talks at \$2500 each, bringing him around \$20,000 in payments. Several of the talks were done by teleconference, but Dr. Goodwin also spoke about Lamictal at Fleming's Prime Steakhouse in Birmingham, Michigan and the Rosebud Steak House in Schaumburg, IL.

Based upon the information provided to my staff, Dr. Goodwin was also very active on behalf of Glaxo in 2005. That year, Glaxo paid Dr. Goodwin over \$300,000 in speaking fees and around \$25,000 in expenses to discuss their products. And this was the same year that he hosted an episode for "The Infinite Mind" on bipolar disorder in kids. Again there was no disclosure on the show about Dr. Goodwin's financial ties to GlaxoSmithKline or other drug companies.

Let's take this one step further. When an episode on bipolar disorder first aired on September 20, 2005, Dr. Goodwin was once again on the road for the Glaxo. Glaxo's records show that the company paid him \$2500 for a talk he gave that day on drug therapy for bipolar disorder.

The talk was at Lemonia, a Tuscan restaurant located at the Ritz Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, FL.

I don't think it takes a journalism or ethics professor to figure out that listeners of a national radio show should be told about the host's financial interests. It just seems obvious. This type of information should be out in the open and transparent.

People should know that since 2000, GlaxoSmithKline has paid the host of a radio program on psychiatry over \$1.2 million in speaking fees and over \$100,000 in expenses. People should know that, based on information from Glaxo, most of these fees were paid to Dr. Goodwin through Best Practice, a pharmaceutical consulting firm that he helped establish in the late nineties. Among the many services that have been offered by Best Practice are marketing consultation, and the "dissemination of new off label information."

Now, I have already pointed out that this independently produced radio show runs on over 300 public radio stations. But it also runs on NPR's satellite station. This got the attention of Margaret Low Smith, a vice president at NPR. She has stated that any show that runs on NPR's satellite station, and I quote, ``must live up to NPR standards."''

So I would like to go over some of those standards as found on NPR's own website. According to NPR's own policies, and I quote, ``confidence in us as independent and fair means avoiding actual and apparent conflicts of interest or engaging in outside activities, public comment or writing that calls into question our ability to report fairly on a subject."''

The policy also states that an individual covered under this code ``has the responsibility to disclose potential conflicts of interest."'' I think these are very fair standards on transparency, and I hope that shows running on NPR will try to live up to them in the future.

It is not my job as a Senator to screen newspapers, the evening news or national radio for my constituents. But it is my job to watch out for taxpayers' money. According to its website and promotional comments made during many of the show's episodes, ``The Infinite Mind" has been made possible, at times, by major underwriting from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

And that is why I am sending out two letters one to the National Institutes of Health and another to the National Science Foundation.

The recently departed director of NIH has already acknowledged that they have problems with their policies when it comes to researchers not reporting outside income. I commend him for recognizing this fact. I also know that the NIH plans on changing its regulations to tighten up disclosure requirements.

But I am not certain about the disclosure requirements when the NIH helps to fund a show like ``The Infinite Mind." I am going to ask the NIH to see if they require ``The Infinite Mind" to disclose the money that drug companies pay to the show's host.

And I am asking the NSF to explain their policies on financial disclosure to see if they might need some changes as well.

I ask unanimous consent to have my letters to the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation printed in the Record. I would also like to commend GlaxoSmithKline for their cooperation with the Committee and their commitment to transparency. It is greatly appreciated.