



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420**

IL 10-2006-005

In Reply Refer To: 10E

February 17, 2006

**UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER
COMPENSATION TO HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS FROM THE
PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY**

1. This Veterans Health Administration Information Letter provides clinicians and managers with information about ethical issues in relationships between health care professionals and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry in VHA.
2. Maintaining appropriate relationships with the pharmaceutical industry is an essential aspect of professionalism and ethical health care practice. Serious ethical concerns have been raised that when providers accept compensation from industry in exchange for their professional services, for example, as consultants or speakers, these relationships risk compromising providers' professional objectivity and integrity and/or undermining their fundamental ethical commitment to putting the interests of patients first. A new report by VHA's National Ethics Committee, Compensation to Health Care Professionals from the Pharmaceutical Industry:
 - a. Discusses the nature of compensated relationships and why compensation to health care professionals from the pharmaceutical industry may be ethically problematic;
 - b. Identifies ethical concerns raised by the formation of compensated relationships between health care professionals and the pharmaceutical industry;
 - c. Recommends that VHA develop national policy with respect to compensated relationships between VA health care professionals and the pharmaceutical industry; and
 - d. Makes specific recommendations regarding the general parameters of an ethically appropriate policy.
3. To ensure a consistent approach to relationships with pharmaceutical representatives throughout the VHA system, clinicians and managers are encouraged to review this report and incorporate its recommendations into policies where appropriate.

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4. The report is available from the National Center for Ethics in Health Care at:
http://vaww.va.gov/vhaethics/resources_4.cfm.
5. The National Center for Ethics in Health Care has been asked to take the lead in drafting policy to provide guidance for VHA employees in this area.
6. Questions about the report may be directed to Ellen Fox, MD, Director, National Center for Ethics in Health Care (10E), at (202) 501-0364.

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