



Position Statement on
Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives in Practice Locations

Unanimously Adopted by the Health Alliance Board of Directors, May 30, 2006

The Puget Sound Health Alliance strongly recommends that doctors, other providers and clinics or physician groups not meet with pharmaceutical sales representatives in facilities where patient care is provided. The Puget Sound Health Alliance encourages doctors and other providers to adopt policies that significantly limit or eliminate access of pharmaceutical sales representatives in clinic or hospital locations. This limitation of access should include distribution of food, gifts, branded office supplies, drug promotional materials, and pre-printed prescription pads.

Supporting Statement:

The Puget Sound Health Alliance recognizes the important role that pharmaceutical companies play in the areas of research, drug development, and information about scientific advances made by each company. It is the intent of the Alliance to partner closely with pharmaceutical companies, along with other constituents in the health plan, physician, employer and consumer communities, when that partnership supports the Alliance's overall goals of improving quality and reducing health care costs in the five-county area of Puget Sound.

The Puget Sound Health Alliance recognizes that the vast majority of doctors and other providers work hard to provide the highest quality care possible for patients, regardless of difficult pressures and influences in the health care system. In partnership with physicians and other local health care leaders, the Alliance is committed to supporting the practice of medicine in the best interest of patients and on the basis of the best available evidence regarding the wide range of available options, rather than on the basis of research presented with the ultimate goal of sales or promotion of a specific drug. The pharmaceutical industry estimates that it spends in excess of \$5 billion a year on marketing directly to physicians. Generally, it is the job of pharmaceutical and sales representatives to market specific products, not to provide unbiased information on the efficacy and availability of the full range of drugs available in the market, including generic¹ equivalents (when available) which often cost substantially less for both the patient and payer. Places where patient care is provided should be "advertising-free zones" where physicians use evidence-based information about the availability and efficacy of drugs from sources that have no vested interest in the outcome, other than high quality, cost-effective health care. Examples of such sources include The Medical Letter, FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, and Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committees in clinics and at the State level.

Therefore, it is the position of the Puget Sound Health Alliance that the presence of pharmaceutical sales representatives in practice locations with direct contact with physicians runs counter to the goals of improving quality and reducing health care costs.

¹ According to the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, "a generic drug is identical, or bioequivalent to a brand name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics and intended use. Although generic drugs are chemically identical to their branded counterparts, they are typically sold at substantial discounts from the branded price. According to the Congressional Budget Office, generic drugs save consumers an estimated \$8 to \$10 billion a year at retail pharmacies."