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Polyclinic statement regarding policy that prevents pharmaceutical representatives from marketing inside the clinic

SEATTLE – May 31, 2006 -- In January 2003, The Polyclinic enacted a policy that banned pharmaceutical representatives from entering the clinic. The Polyclinic believes visits from sales reps are disruptive to patient care, and ultimately undermine the organization's commitment to providing the highest quality of care at a reasonable cost.

Three years later, The Polyclinic remains closed to pharmaceutical reps, and supports the Puget Sound Health Alliance in its recommendation for doctors, clinics and physician groups to significantly limit or eliminate access of pharmaceutical sales representatives in clinic or hospital locations.

"We've essentially taken the sales element out of the decision of prescribing medications," said Ralph Rossi, MD, MPH, president of The Polyclinic. "As a result, our patients receive a high quality of care at the most appropriate cost."

With the absence of free samples and drug reps in the clinic, The Polyclinic has found physicians more likely to prescribe generics over brand name drugs. "Generics are safe, effective in treatment and save everyone money," said Rossi.

Before implementing the policy in 2003, The Polyclinic gave careful consideration to making sure the lack of free samples would not negatively impact low-income patients and that physicians would still receive the education they need to keep current on the newest drugs.

In addition to relying heavily on monthly journals and educational conferences to stay informed on the latest in drugs and medical treatment, The Polyclinic physicians have proactively established two successful programs that address any potential gap:

- 1.) **PharmaConnect – The Polyclinic Community Health Foundation** established a pharmacy assistance program that links low-income individuals to the medications that they otherwise may not be able to afford. The program has also prevented low-income patients from having to switch or cease medications when a free sample of an otherwise costly drug runs out.
- 2.) **Monthly Scientific Seminars** – The Polyclinic organizes monthly seminars for its physicians, covering new studies and updates on drugs.

"Our physicians have found the added education through the seminars to be helpful and a great opportunity to exchange ideas with their peers," said Rossi. "We realize that not all physician groups have these resources, and other physicians in the community are welcome to join us."