



# THE “KETHICAL” DILEMMA

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## POINTS TO CONSIDER

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Biotech and pharmaceutical companies are instrumental in shaping the health care of the average Joe; these companies steer medical research and influence government health care policies. Life Science companies inherit some of the most challenging ethical situations as they straddle two complex worlds of saving lives and pleasing stakeholders in the web of business.

In a world where Life Science companies face bioethical challenges, do firms have support in identifying and handling tough business and ethical decisions? While committees such as Institutional Review Boards (IRB) may encourage ethical behavior, many Life Science companies still are faced with tough business decisions that

have bioethical implications. In fact, some difficult decisions do not even require a formal IRB review or that a decision must precede any type of IRB meeting.

In many fields, it is not uncommon for academics to consult for industries when an expert opinion is needed. Academic bioethicists, who are known to be the experts in the field of bioethics, have debated amongst themselves if it makes sense for them to be paid by Life Science corporations to provide professional advice on specific bioethical situations.

While some academic bioethicists feel that their involvement in providing guidance to life science companies is more or less a duty and is merited, others feel that the conflicts of

interest and credibility issues inherently involved with this type of consultation can compromise bioethics itself.

Can an academic bioethicist who consults for a Life Science company be taken seriously if the company whom they are expected to assess is paying them?

For Life Science companies who receive these types of services, what is their responsibility to act upon these expert opinions?

Do you believe that Academic bioethicists who provide consulting services for Life Science firms belong in the industry?

Source: MacDonald C. Corporate ethics in the life sciences: Can bioethics help? Should it? *HEC Forum*, 2005; 17(2), pp. 121-133. <http://www.springerlink.com/>

## Ethics in Industry-Academic Partnerships

Sarah Arlien

There has been a great deal of publicity over the last decade highlighting failures of some academic researchers to disclose industry ties. Studies have shown that company sponsored studies of the sponsor's products are generally more favorable than independent studies (publication bias) and that unfavorable data may sometimes be omitted from a report (report bias). People say this is because of the financial interests of researchers with industry ties.

Lutz Heinemann makes the claim that academics have just as much, if not more, financial interest in the results of their own studies. Failure to get a

study published may impede a scientist's career or even necessitate new employment for an academic researcher. Heinemann suggests that the number of "black sheep" in academia and industry is equal and that strict monitoring of data is appropriate for all publication submissions, rather than just industry-sponsored studies (1).

Despite such suggestions, society continues to paint industry-academia partnerships in an unfavorable light. Universities are responding with stricter enforcement of conflict of interest policies, but there is concern that such policies are limiting what could be beneficial relationships.

Bernard Lo, a medical ethics professor from UCSF says, "Some relationships are desirable. They benefit the public and industry as well as academia and should be fostered." Thomas Stossel, a Harvard Medical School professor, suggests that industry ties actually encourage more ethical behaviors: "If I have an interest in a company, I want that company to succeed, and that company is interested in me because of my objectivity and reputation and scientific integrity. If I compromise that, I'm of no use to anybody" (2).

So what do you think? Does unethical research happen more frequently in purely aca-

demically sponsored research? Or are there equal amounts in both?

Vote online at [Academia or Industry? Who is more ethical?](#)

(link provided via email and at [www.kgi.edu](http://www.kgi.edu) under current students/*Kethical Dilemma*).

### References:

- 1) Heinemann, L. (2008). Are All Clinical Studies Sponsored by Industry Not Valid? *Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology*, 2 (6), 1161-1163.
- 2) Shaffer, C. (2010). Report concludes industry-academia partnerships on the wane. *Nature Biotechnology*, 28 (1), 7-8.

# Should the U.S. Ban DTC Advertising?

Chandana Thorat

According to a 2007 study by Partnership of Drug Free America, the number of Americans undergoing rehabilitation therapy for prescription drug abuse is almost equal to those for psychedelic drug abuse (1). Direct to consumer advertising (DTCA) by pharmaceutical companies has been blamed for making use of prescription drugs as an everyday convenience rather than a serious decision worthy of thought. Critics hold DTCA responsible for encouraging the off-label use of drugs; for example, Silikon 1000®, approved for retinal treatments, and Sculptra®, approved to treat facial fat loss in HIV-positive patients, were promoted as non-surgical cosmetic procedures in beauty magazines like Harper's *Bazaar* (2),(3). DTC advertising has

always been controversial, with only two countries, the United States and New Zealand, allowing it. Concerns regarding this form of advertising have been growing since the introduction of prescription-drug benefit in Medicare in 2006 (4).

The Pharmaceutical industry argues that DTCA increases public awareness of the many drugs available in the market and their beneficial effects. These commercials may help educate people regarding various medical conditions and encourage them to seek professional help. A study of physicians, published in the *Health Affairs* journal, reports that 25% of DTCA related patient visits resulted in new diagnosis (5). Patrons of DTCA point out that the FDA's approval along with that of a physician

constitutes a reasonable amount of caution to use these drugs (1). There is a thin line between informative and persuasive advertising, with the later being the cause of much controversy.

Spending and lobbying for DTCA has continued to increase, despite pressure on manufacturers to curtail such advertising. The "new FDA" under the Obama Government and Commissioner Margaret Hamburg have vowed to tone down DTCA. In 2009, the FDA issued twice the number of warning letters to either voluntarily stop or tone down DTCA than in 2008 says a *Bloomberg* report (6). Commercials for Pfizer's *Chantix*, now showcase a minute's worth of side effects as compared to 14 seconds previously (6). The



<http://www.everyjoe.com/articles/files/2008/01/pfizer-chantix-ad-stop>

year 2010 started with the FDA issuing warnings to companies like Bayer, Amylin Pharmaceuticals, Eli Lilly and Cephalon to stop using DTCA and other promotions (7). In spite of the FDA crackdown, the tug of war between Big Pharma advertising and the consumer's right to accurate information continues with no clear winner.

# Plagiarism: Where are the borders?

Sri Ramya Maddilate

We always ensure that we do not commit any sort of plagiarism here at KGI. The reason why we abide KGI's honor code could be our sheer moral conscience or our inner fear of getting caught and facing the consequences. But what's the real world scenario outside KGI like?

In Asia, studies reveal that one in every three researchers at major institutes and universities commits plagiarism either by falsification or fabrication of data. A *Nature* article describes the academic situation in China where the "market for dubious science-publishing activities, such as ghostwriting papers on

nonexistent research, was of the order of 1 billion renminbi (US\$150 million) in 2009" (8).

This extent of misconduct by researchers and scientists could be due to academic pressure to publish or to achieve success and short term perks. But what could be the real reason behind this? If we focus on countries like India, it does not have any statutory body to deal with scientific misconduct. Hence, most of the plagiarism cases are unrecognized and even if they get caught, they are dealt with in a very ad hoc fashion to resolve the issue. It is most likely that they escape with a

minor punishment and no severe sentence.

"I do think that the whole plagiarism issue is becoming very serious in places like China, where people can buy degrees, even PhD, with money. It's horrifying because it can have huge impacts," says Jessica Lin, MBS Class of 2011.

The extent of plagiarism occurring in academic institutions all over the world is indeed critical. What could be done to improve this situation? Does having a proper scientific committee to verify the research work prior to publication help to reduce the corrup-

tion? Just because some researchers are involved in plagiarism, is it ethical to question the work done by scientists who are really working hard to contribute to the society? As a responsible student, what measures would you take to eradicate the plagiarism in your academic institution?



<http://sociology.camden.rutgers.edu/jfm/plagiarism/plagiarism.jpg>

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# The Dual-Use Dilemma: Possible Solutions

**Marc Pollack**

In my previous article, I brought up the dual-use dilemma in research. I'd like to discuss some possible solutions to this dilemma and the actual debate currently ensuing in the area. The dilemma, as I stated before, stems from the problem presented by certain bodies of research. Are certain research results dangerous to our society? This is especially problematic when a disease is being engineered or recreated, resulting in a potent infectious agent that could cause massive damage in the wrong hands. On the other hand, this is still scientific research. The people doing the research do tend to have good motives, most of which are based in preventing these kinds of harms in the future, and they must publish even the mate-

rials and methods of their experiments to justify their research.

This issue has led to numerous attempts at a solution. *Science*, *Nature*, and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* have issued a joint statement that they would not publish any materials that could be weaponized. Though this is an extremely subjective determination, it nonetheless prevents many of these experiments and their results from being made widely available, thus allowing any person or group to obtain them easily. The National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) was established in 2004, and is currently attempting to develop specific criteria for identifying this

type of research and various mechanisms to keep it from becoming too public. However, this system still relies too much on the scientists' self-censorship, which is unlikely to occur in most cases, as well as supporting a system whereby scientists can withhold valuable information about their research.

Other possible solutions are currently being developed. These include attacking the problem of biological weapons head on by ensuring that the technology is not weaponized, and increasing the responsibility of the global scientific community as a whole. The issue lies in whether either of these is feasible. Is it possible for anyone to ensure that even a majority of biological weapon

facilities are stopped, or that the global community changes its mindset? These are worthwhile paths to take, but probably won't suffice by themselves. The hope is that, in tandem with light governmental restrictions and better personal judgment by scientists the world over, we will see a future where the dual-use dilemma is a much lesser problem, though it will always be there as long as we have scientific research.



<http://33interactions.com.au/33blog/social-media/ethical-issues-in-marketing-research-and-social-media>

## Bioethics Speaker Schedule

**Professor Brian Keeley**

This spring semester, first year students are taking the course, "Bioindustry Ethics and Society" on Thursday nights from 5:00—7:20 pm taught by Professor Brian Keely from Pitzer College.

This semester's class will feature a number of guest lecturers--two ethicists, a developmental psychologist & a science journalist--drawn from the Claremont and larger Southern California region who will be presenting on a number of different topics at the intersection of Bioscience and society at large. The talks will take place in the 517 Lecture Hall on Thursday evenings from 5:00-7:20 (although, watch your email for any last minute changes). If you're interested in the topic, please feel free to join us. (In some cases, there will be readings associated with the lectures.) - BK

**2/11**

"The Fallacy of Genetic Determinism & Epigenetics: Implementing a Developmental Point of View" by David Moore, Psychology at Pitzer

**3/04**

"The Ethics of Genetic Testing" by Rivka Weinberg, Philosophy, Scripps College

**3/11**

"How to talk to a science journalist" by Shari Roan, Science writer, Los Angeles Times

**3/25**

"Eugenics and Disability Issues" by N. Ann Davis, Philosophy, Pomona College

