

Study: Pharmaceutical firms distort data

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A survey by the journal *Nature* suggests pharmaceutical companies are distorting decisions about how their products are to be prescribed.

The London-based research journal's investigation revealed academics and physicians who write the rules on how to prescribe drugs have extensive financial connections with the pharmaceutical industry.

In a survey of the panels that write clinical practice guidelines, *Nature* found more than a third of authors declared financial links to relevant drug companies, with nearly 70 percent of panels affected. In one case, every member of the panel had been paid by the company responsible for the drug that was ultimately recommended.

"The numbers in the survey are distressing," says Drummond Rennie, deputy editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and an advocate of proposals to free guidelines from industry influence. "The practice stinks."

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