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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

• Many facets of industry and academia collaboration are receiving renewed attention and scrutiny, including the logistics of medical faculty collaboration with industry on medical publications.

• In efforts to formally address the manner of this interaction, both pharmaceutical manufacturers and medical institutions have endeavored to establish internal policies to guide or eliminate such partnerships.

• There appear to be considerable variation in this effort, in execution, interpretation, and perception of need, however, such efforts remain uncharacterized.

• We conducted a survey of accredited medical schools in an attempt to understand the aggregate direction of their perceptions and efforts regarding faculty collaboration with industry in the development of publications intended for submission to peer-reviewed journals.

METHODS & RESPONDERS

Student Population

• We identified Deans of 125 out of the 130 (96%) US medical schools accredited by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC, http://www.aamc.org/). The AAMC did not endorse or review, and was otherwise not involved with this study (ie, we simply used their publicly available list of accredited institutions).

Survey Development & Administration

• A cover letter was developed along with an inquiry survey regarding the existence and nature of medical schools’ policies on faculty collaboration with industry on medical publications.

• Questions were multiple choice, with opportunities to provide free responses.

• We retrieved email addresses for the 125 Deans through internet search. Most addresses were available on the institutions’ websites.

• We used the SurveyMonkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com) tool for survey administration and data collection.

• The 8-question survey was sent to all Deans or their designees for whom an email address could be obtained. The first wave was sent approximately 6pm Monday February 23, 2009. A second wave was sent approximately 3:30pm Tuesday March 17 to first-wave nonrespondents. The survey was closed Wednesday April 1.

Survey Responders

• Of the 125 email addresses obtained, 6 had opted out from receiving unsolicited surveys and 24 email addresses were not verifiable.

• The first wave was sent to 95 (76%) of the 125 Deans/emails.

• As of March 17, there were 15 (16%) responses, leaving 80 nonresponders who received the second wave.

• As of April 1, there were 22/95 (23%) total responders.

RESULTS

Question 1 - 22 (100%) responses

Please indicate which of the following most closely approximates your institution’s approach to faculty collaboration with industry in the development of peer-reviewed publications (not promotion).

Policy in placing faculty to work with industry on peer-reviewed publications, with defined parameters:

No policy currently in place, but one is in development 36.4%

Policy in place forbidding faculty from working with industry on submissions to peer-reviewed journals in any capacity 11.8%

Policy in place allowing faculty to work with industry on peer-reviewed publications, with defined parameters 9.1%

No policy currently in place nor in development, but we are thinking about it 9.1%

No policy in place and no intention to develop one 4.5%

Individual acknowledgement/disclaimers within the institution are charged with determining their own policy on faculty collaboration with industry on peer-reviewed publications 0.0%

Other [free responses] 9.1%

• Tax free responses were submitted:

• “School has a ghost authorship policy prohibiting faculty from serving as author on any publication in which ghost authorship has occurred. School also posted to adopt conflict of interest policy dealing with faculty interactions with industry. School also posted to adopt a professionalism policy which will set standards including compliance with applicable rules of professional ethics and with professionalism in the conduct of research including commitment to intellectual integrity and diligent and unbiased acquisition, evaluation, and reporting of research data.”

• “We have no intention of attempting to restrict what our faculty say or write, or with whom they co-author their oral or written comments….provided they always adhere to academic standards of co-authorship.”

Question 2 - 12 (55%) responses

If your institution's policies regarding faculty interactions with industry on peer-reviewed publications:

• Are developed by a single group, but must ensure independence and autonomy of faculty 33.3%

• Forst policy forbids faculty from authoring papers with industry without significant contribution to the study and the actual writing of the manuscript 36.4%

• Our authorship policy states: “To be listed as an author of an original scientific article, an investigator must have:

• Participated in the conception and design of the research and has written the first draft of the manuscript

• Contributed intellectual content to the development of the paper from concept through publication and has written the first draft of the manuscript

• Conducted a primary analysis of the data and wrote the first draft of the manuscript” 41.7%

Question 3 - 7 (32%) responses

Please feel free to share any key attributes of your institution’s policies regarding faculty interactions with industry on peer-reviewed publications:

• Our policy states: “If your institution’s policy varies regarding industry collaboration on peer-reviewed publications, do you require/allow any of the following? (check all that apply)

• Access to raw data 58.3%

• Honorarium 58.3%

• Industrial statistical review prior to submission 33.3%

• Independent statistical review prior to submission 16.7%

• Writing assistance 54.5%

• Help with the development of tables and/or figures 72.7%

• Fact-checking assistance 72.7%

• Statistical support 68.8%

• Reference checking/formatting assistance 81.8%

• Editing assistance 81.8%

• Help with a journal submission 45.5%

• Honorarium 0.0%

Question 4 - 12 (55%) responses

If your institution's policies regarding faculty interactions with industry on peer-reviewed publications:

• Do you require/allow any of the following? (check all that apply)

• Full access to raw data 41.7%

• Industry medical/scientific review prior to submission 33.3%

• Independent statistical review prior to submission 16.7%

• Writing assistance 54.5%

• Help with a journal submission 45.5%

• Honorarium 0.0%

Summary & Conclusions

- Existence and disposition of institutional policies varied
- Most schools reported either having a policy in place that allowed faculty to work with industry under defined parameters, or are developing a policy
- Most policies were implemented or last updated within the past 1.5 years
- Policies did not differentiate based on collaboration on a clinical study vs review paper
- Academic institutions’ approaches to industry involvement in peer-reviewed publications appear to harbor as much “in-class” variance as those of related stakeholders (i.e., journals, industry)
- Institutional policies, in general, do not seem to lean toward eliminating collaboration between academia and industry
- There is need for greater definition and congruence in parameters of academia-industry collaboration on peer-reviewed publications