

Concurrent Session A4-1

**Clinicians' Attitudes Regarding Pharmaceutical Marketing  
and Computerized Prescribing Alerts**

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**Objectives:** To study clinicians' attitudes about pharmaceutical marketing practices and computerized prescribing alerts.

**Methods:** A 21-item web-based survey was sent to 651 prescribing clinicians (physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners) at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates (HVMA), a multi-specialty group practice in greater Boston. The survey contained 15 four-point Likert-type questions assessing clinicians' attitudes towards pharmaceutical marketing, attempts by HVMA to support prescribing decisions, and 6 questions about provider characteristics. The study is funded by the Attorney General Consumer and Prescriber Education Grant Program and functions in collaboration with 3 other HMORN-based recipients of the AG grants.

**Results:** Data collection will be complete by December 2006. To date, surveys were returned from 225 clinicians, yielding a preliminary response rate of 35%. The majority (64%) felt that the pharmaceutical industry acts unethically in marketing drugs to prescribers, and 79% reported that direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising does not help patients be better informed about their health problems and medications. Almost all respondents (91%) indicated that DTC leads many patients to request medications that are inappropriate for their conditions, and 29% reported having difficulty saying "no" (when appropriate) to patients who request medications they have seen advertised. Despite 94% of clinicians indicating that they have ready access to all the information needed to guide prescribing decisions, only 53% reported they have a good sense of how much patients pay for prescription medications and 22% indicated that they infrequently consider the amount of a patient's co-payment. The majority of providers (80%) stated that computerized prescribing alerts are clinically useful and only 36% of respondents indicated that there are currently too many clinical prescribing alerts despite their frequent use within HVMA's electronic prescribing system. Data will be presented on the predictors of attitudes.

**Conclusions:** The majority of clinicians reported that the pharmaceutical industry acts unethically in marketing drugs to providers and that DTC advertising may adversely influence prescribing decisions. In the setting of rapidly rising pharmaceutical costs and abundant DTC advertising, computerized prescribing alerts targeting heavily marketed medications may offer acceptable real-time support of clinicians' prescribing decisions.