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we greatly appreciate their insights and dedication," Dr. Agin says.

Dermatologist **Mary Lupo, M.D.**, of New Orleans, says she enjoys being invited to participate in industry advisory boards and performing clinical trials. "I feel it gives me the most up-to-date information," she says.

Heidi A. Waldorf, M.D., who practices in Nanuet, N.Y., and is associate clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, has worked with industry in various capacities, including on boards, as a consultant, speaker, investigator and trainer.

"As a dermatologist, both in clinical practice and actively involved in teaching, I believe these relationships can be beneficial," Dr. Waldorf says. "At the end of the day, we are not working for the companies, we are working for our patients."

Dr. Waldorf says physicians could influence industry to make a positive difference. "I have to believe that our input as physicians can make a difference and help guide industry," she says. "Ultimately, their decisions will be made on the economics. But we must be able to steer them toward implementing programs that will be beneficial for our patients and our offices. Physician involvement has also steered companies toward acquisitions of products."

One example, according to Dr. Waldorf: "Despite being the most used sclerosing agent worldwide, polidocanol wasn't available in the U.S. Key opinion leaders in dermatology prevailed upon companies to try to get someone interested in doing the studies necessary for FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approval and, finally, it happened (Asclera by BioForm, now Merz)."

**Paid marketers**

To downplay that physicians can — and do — become paid marketers for industry is a bad case of denial, according to Dr. Campbell.

"Many of the things that masquerade as research relationships are simply marketing relationships, things that drug companies do to make doctors believe they are engaged in the research process, when in fact it's simply about getting that doctor to use that company's product or services. That's the physician being a part-time drug salesman," Dr. Campbell says.

Conversely, patients might benefit when physicians consult with industry, in terms of research that can spur the development of new products and services, according to Dr. Campbell.

"I think the vast majority of new products and services that we have on the market today

**Dr. Lupo**

have come about because of close relationships between researchers and drug companies," he says. "I think that's what the American people want. So, I think that in academic medical centers, we should support ... those things."

Motives play a role in whether these relationships hurt or help patients, according to Dr. Campbell. Physicians, he says, need to realize they can be made pawns of industry. Industry

**Dr. Waldorf**

has one goal, he says: to increase sales. Physicians also should look at what's motivating them to work with industry.

"Relationships between doctors and drug companies have been a long-term underground economy of payola," he says.

As a result, Dr. Campbell says he thinks physicians should avoid paid industry relationships that are purely marketing-oriented — such as being a paid speaker, for example. And they should consider providing the service for free, he says.

"In terms of research relationships, I think the key is to make sure these things are done using research grants and contracts that are negotiated at an institutional level. Consulting relationships need to be disclosed to institutions. And I think physicians need to think about the extent to which what they are doing is actually providing a beneficial service," he says.

**Striking the balance**

**Dr. Lupo** says dermatologists are in control of how these relationships influence quality of care.

"I, for one, have never let industry relation-

ships dictate my prescribing or treatment protocols. If you do, you let down your patients, and in the end, the companies really do not value yes-men," **Dr. Lupo** says. "They want your honest opinion. Give it, and it increases the value of your opinion. Sell your favor to the highest bidder, and you lose your credibility and are of no value to industry."

Dermatologists thinking about consulting for industry need to remain objective and independent, Dr. Waldorf says.

"One of the reasons I think it is important to consult for a variety of companies is so that you can remain an independent observer and educator," Dr. Waldorf says. "Everyone knows who is 'in the company's pocket' and therefore isn't taken as seriously in the academic community. It is also important that the physician never put industry interests ahead of those of the patients."

That's the real question, according to Dr. Campbell: To what extent do patients benefit from these relationships?

"Patients do not benefit when drug companies provide doctors free lunches and trips," Dr. Campbell says. **DT**

Disclosures: Dr. Waldorf either is or has been an advisory board member, consultant, speakers bureau member, investigator, and/or trainer for Allergan, Medics, Merz, Valeant, Solta, Unilever, Procter & Gamble and L'Oreal. Dr. Leffell is consultant for Coppertone, Merck and Unilever. Throughout the past year, **Dr. Lupo** has been a speaker, trainer, ad board member and researcher for Allergan; speaker and trainer for Medics; trainer for Valeant; speaker for Lumenis; speaker for BTL; consultant for Philosophy; and a researcher for Kythera and Neocutis. Dr. Campbell reports no relevant financial interests.

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