



# INDIANA UNIVERSITY

## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

### **The Physician Payment Sunshine Act and the Open Payments Website**

On Tuesday, September 30, 2014, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released to the public the Open Payments website, as required by the Physician Payment Sunshine Act. A goal of the Sunshine Act is to better inform patients of financial interactions and relationships between physicians and industry with regards to the promotion and sale of prescription medications and medical devices. Focusing on transparency, this website provides an opportunity for the public to have access to financial interactions between physicians, teaching hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and medical device companies. A few examples of such interactions include consultation, speaking engagements, or research.

IUSM has reviewed its conflict of interest and industry relations policies in 2014, and will be approving a new policy later this year that provides guidance to its faculty, fellows, residents and students about certain interactions with industry. A draft policy was already crafted, and IUSM faculty made suggestions during an "Open Comment" period that helped shape a final version. The policy will detail specifics about those interactions and will describe what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. After the policy is finalized, it will be placed on the school's website in full transparency to all.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***I found that my doctor is listed on the Open Payments website as being a consultant with a pharmaceutical company. What does this mean?***

This can have several meanings. Your physician may have conducted research on a medication developed by that company, or may have been a speaker to other physicians about one or more medicines developed by that company. You may want to ask your doctor how that interaction might impact how she/he works with you to manage your care. IUSM will soon be rolling out a policy which outlines appropriate relationships with pharmaceutical companies.

***My doctor is listed on the Open Payments website as performing research with a medical device company. What should I do?***

This likely means that your doctor has worked with that company to use a medical device for specific patients like yourself to improve care. Examples of medical devices used to treat patients include pacemakers and/or defibrillators to manage abnormal heart rhythms, continuous glucose monitors to control blood sugar levels in certain patients with type 1 diabetes, and coronary stents to open up blood vessels around the heart after a heart attack. Speaking with your physician about how the device helps patients like you is a good way for you to better understand the device and the role your doctor plays in using that device to optimize health.

***In reviewing the Open Payments website, I found that my doctor speaks to other doctors about a particular drug made by one specific drug company. She has prescribed that drug to me. Should I ask to change the medication or switch doctors?***

There are many reasons for choosing to start a patient on a medication. One of the most important is to address a patient's understanding of a particular diagnosis, and the patient's opinions and level of understanding about why medication may be needed. Treatment decisions are ideal when patients, along with their health care providers, use "shared decision-making". It is likely that your doctor has counseled you about the need to use that medication for a particular medical condition. The best thing to do is to review with your doctor which specific medicine(s) may be best for you. In addition, you are encouraged to have a discussion with your doctor about her relationship with that company and how it impacts the medication she has prescribed for you. Regarding stopping or switching medication, you should always contact your doctor about the risks and benefits of changing any medication.