

Increasingly, pharmaceutical companies are providing continuing education materials for use at hospital staff meetings. These materials generally are produced by independent companies such as Medcom and Health Learning Systems on contract for pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Examples of Multi-media Presentations

Health Learning Systems, in cooperation with the National High Blood Pressure Education Program, the Council for High Blood Pressure Research of the American Heart Association, and the National Kidney Foundation has produced an excellent series of materials on hypertension. The series, called Dialogues in Hypertension was produced under an educational grant from Smith Kline & French (SKF) Laboratories, manufacturers of Dyazide, a fixed-combination diuretic indicated for hypertension. Let me emphasize that none of the materials produced were favorable to Dyazide specifically and, if anything, deemphasized the product.

In this instance the educational materials, while industry-supported, were under the total control of a Federal-private program of unquestioned independence and prestige which was furthering the widely-accepted goal of assuring that more people with high blood pressure were diagnosed and treated. SKF did no more than pay the bills. The goal of the overall program happened to coincide with the goals of manufacturers of drugs used in treating hypertension and with good medical practice.

In many other cases, however, increased use of medication is not necessarily consistent with good medical practice.