

## STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GORDON H. SMITH

U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging  
**“Paid to Prescribe?: Exploring the Relationship Between Doctors and  
the Drug Industry”**  
June 27, 2007

Good morning. Thank you all for coming to today’s hearing that will explore the influence that prescription drug companies have on the medical community.

Drug manufacturers have been targeting marketing efforts to specific physicians for decades, beginning as early as the 1940s. However, with technological advances and the growth of the prescription drug industry’s role in the nation’s healthcare system, some of their more recent promotional tactics may be crossing the line of appropriate business practice.

The doctor-patient relationship is the cornerstone of the American healthcare system. I am concerned this relationship is being threatened by overzealous drug marketers and manufacturers seeking “expert” endorsements of their products. While businesses have the right to promote their products, some of the current practices of the drug industry give me pause for concern. I find it remarkable that drug sales representatives can access detailed information about a particular physician’s prescribing history on their personal digital assistants—or PDAs—all so they can promote one drug over another.

There clearly is a need for drug companies to communicate information about the availability of new breakthrough drug therapies, but there is a difference in supplying objective information and providing financial incentives that are aimed at getting a physician to choose one drug over another. At the end of the day, the only issue that should matter is the patient’s health and what treatment works best for them.

As is the case with many issues, some states have moved forward with trying to shine some light on the relationships between drug companies and the medical community. Their efforts have ranged from simple disclosure requirements for financial incentives paid to a physician, to prohibiting the use of prescribing history to target marketing efforts. I look forward to hearing firsthand about the impact those initiatives have had and whether they may need to be replicated by every state.

I also am pleased that witnesses representing both drug manufacturers and physicians are joining us today. Their respective industries have taken steps to set standards for the drug company-physician relationship. Unfortunately, research tends to suggest that these efforts are not being embraced well by physicians or drug manufacturers. I believe the interested parties need to tell us exactly how they plan to improve their “self-policing”

efforts to guarantee that drug product marketing is not impeding on good science and patient safety.

Chairman Kohl has assembled a well-rounded group of witnesses for today's hearing. I, for one, am looking forward to learning more about this issue so we can better determine if a new course of action is needed to ensure patient safety is the chief concern of the medical and prescription drug communities.

Thank you.