

**Newsletter 42 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Promotion of
Misleading Health Information**

18th November 2013

I'd like to draw your attention to an inquiry that is taking place in the NSW parliament. It is titled 'Inquiry into the Promotion of False or Misleading Health-Related Information or Practices'. This inquiry is being held by the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC). This is the consumer watchdog that investigates consumer complaints or concerns. The aim of the inquiry is to report on possible measures to address the promotion of unscientific health-related information or practices that may be detrimental to individual or public health. Here is a link to the inquiry and the terms of reference.

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/Parlment/committee.nsf/0/6AF793E8FD4555BCC A257C0700041A56?open&refnavid=CO3_1

This is a worthy inquiry but the terms of reference state that they would like to target

'The publication and/or the dissemination of false or misleading information that may cause the community to mistrust an accepted medical practice.' This aim needs to be examined.

Preventing the dissemination of false and misleading information is a worthy aim however preventing any information that leads the public to 'mistrust an accepted medical practice' results in the suppression of proper scientific debate on health issues – and this is dangerous to public health.

In 2013 it is known that industry sponsored research in medicine has resulted in a peer-reviewed system of knowledge that is flawed. This system is now providing false and misleading health information that doctors and governments are using to make important decisions on public health. Here is a quote that sums up the flawed peer-reviewed system:

'Members of corporate driven special interest groups, in virtue of their financial power and close ties with other members of the group often get leading roles in editing medical journals and in advising non-profit research organizations' (Krimsky 2003 p.10).

Many prominent scientists and journal editors have now exposed this flawed system including Marcia Angell MD, former Chief Editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, for 20 years.

In addition, it is known that the following practices are rife in the current model of medicine in Australia:

- Doctors being paid to give presentations using pharmaceutical company slides with pharmaceutically funded research and statistics
- Doctors given free international trips and paid to give presentations to promote drugs
- Pharmaceutical sales representatives given large bonuses to sell a drug even after concerns were raised about the side-effects of the drugs
- The hidden industry ties of academics in universities and similarly in government advisory boards.
- The conflicts of interest in the media presentation of drugs and their side-effects
- The conflicts of interest in Australia's National Immunisation Conference presented by the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA). This conference is funded by the pharmaceutical companies
- The hidden ties between industry and the chief-editors on peer-reviewed journals, who are selecting against articles with negative findings on drugs/vaccines.
- Little research funding being provided for research in the public interest. In particular, the possibility that the chemicals in the 13 vaccines now recommended to infants under 12 months of age, are causing the steep increase in chronic illness in our children.

If these practices are known to exist in the practice of medicine and they are not made transparent to the public, then it is important that everyone is allowed to present scientific information for debate.

It is also important that the public is included in decisions made on public health policy so they can present *the science that is in the public interest*. Industry representatives are not going to present this science for inclusion in health policies.

The suggestion that only 'medical doctors' can provide the science on health issues is a fallacy and it places the emphasis of the debate on the 'qualifications' and not the 'science'.

The fact that it is possible for doctors to be educated with biased information due to industry sponsorship of their education means that they *may* be misinforming the public. Industry sponsored medical education and research puts public health at risk. Doctors are no longer being educated with disinterested science and therefore they should not be the only members of society presenting science for public debate.

Please take an interest in public health and write a submission to this enquiry.

Submissions close 13th December 2013.

Kind regards,

Judy Wilyman MSc

PhD Candidate

www.vaccinationdecisions.net