

Is your doctor on a drug company's payroll?

October 23rd, 2010, · posted by [Teri Sforza](#), OCRegister staff writer



Golden State doctors received a total of **\$26.4 million** from **seven** drug companies for consulting and speaking gigs since 2009, according to an eye-opening investigation by ProPublica titled **“Dollars for Docs: What Drug Companies are Paying Your Doctor.”**

That includes physicians in **Costa Mesa, Anaheim, Newport Coast, Irvine, Garden Grove, Orange, Santa Ana, Fullerton**, and all around OC, some of whom have accepted **tens of thousands of dollars** each.

Why does it matter?

Federal whistleblower lawsuits have charged that drug companies have used such payments to reward doctors who dole out oodles and oodles of prescriptions for their drugs. “Are dinner talks prompting doctors to prescribe risky drugs when there are safer alternatives?” ProPublica asks. “Or are effective generics overlooked in favor of pricey brand-name drugs?”

[Search to see if your doctor has received such payments here.](#) *But keep in mind that this database — and the **\$26.4 million** figure — is nothing close to a true total of what doctors get from drug companies.* It’s just the total from the **seven** major companies that are already disclosing the payments. The *other 70* or so drug companies will be required to disclose these payments by 2013, thanks to that new health care reform law. The feds will then post the information on the web.

“If you see somebody who has received a sum of money, particularly a relatively large sum, and the first question would be, ‘Am I on any products that are manufactured by that company?’” **Fred Ralston, Jr.**, president of the **American College of Physicians**, told ProPublica, the nonprofit investigative news organization.

If the answer is yes, it’s not necessarily a problem — but it’s worth discussing further, ProPublica says. You should ask your doctor which companies are involved, the nature of the relationship between your doctor and the company, and how long that relationship has lasted. Most often, doctors are paid for promotional activities, such as speaking to other doctors about a drug, or for consulting or research, ProPublica said

Drug companies say they hire the most-respected doctors in their fields for the critical task of teaching about the benefits and risks of their drugs. ProPublica found, however, that hundreds of doctors on company payrolls had been accused of professional misconduct were disciplined by state boards or lacked credentials as researchers or specialists.

“The implications are great for patients, who in the past have been exposed to such heavily marketed drugs as the painkiller **Bextra** and the diabetes drug **Avandia**— billion-dollar blockbusters until dangerous side effects emerged,” ProPublica says. From IMKangen.com 714-274-0930