

## **Pitt gets an 'A' for drug conflict policy**

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By Joe Fahy, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine received a top ranking in a new assessment of medical schools' conflicts-of-interest policies related to the pharmaceutical industry.

Pitt was among seven medical schools that received an "A" rating in the AMSA PharmFree ScoreCard, developed from a survey by the American Medical Student Association.

Fourteen schools received a "B," four a "C," 19 a "D" and 60 an "F," according to scorecard results released earlier this week. Schools that did not provide their conflicts-of-interest policies automatically received a failing grade.

Twenty-eight schools received a grade of "in process" because their policies are under review or revision.

The student group collaborated with The Prescription Project, which works to eliminate conflicts-of-interest in medicine caused by pharmaceutical marketing to physicians, to evaluate each school's policy in 11 areas. Among other criteria, the scorecard assessed a school's policies on gifts from the drug industry, including sample medications.

Pitt and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center implemented a new conflicts-of-interest policy Feb. 15, though some details are being finalized.

The scorecard calls the policy exemplary, saying it contains model guidelines in a number of areas.

Among other provisions, the Pitt-UPMC policy bans gifts such as pens, note pads and food provided by industry representatives as they work to present information about their products at doctors' offices.

Doctors can still accept medication samples from industry representatives, with some restrictions. Pitt and UPMC officials are working to develop a centralized process for accepting the samples.

The policy also includes stipulations on consulting relationships with industry, attendance at off-campus industry-sponsored meetings, and industry support for scholarships and fellowships.

Pitt received a "B" grade in a similar ranking last year by the student medical association, and some schools with top grades in that ranking did worse this year.

The two rankings used different methodologies, said Gabriel Silverman, a Pitt medical student who helped oversee the scorecard project.

Last year's grading system focused mostly on whether a school had a policy or not, he said, noting that this year's system more rigorously assessed a policy's quality.

Mr. Silverman noted that he was not involved in grading the policies for this year's scorecard. That task, he said, was handled by independent assessors who were not told the names of the schools whose policies they were reviewing.

Other schools receiving an "A" rating this year were the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Maryland, and the medical schools of the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of California, Davis; and the University of California, San Francisco.

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