Joint Press Release of June 20, 2016

Research-based pharmaceutical companies implement Transparency Code

- As part of the Transparency Code, the member companies of the association “Voluntary Self-Regulation for the Pharmaceutical Industry” (FSA) and of the German Association of Research-based Pharmaceutical Companies (vfa) are disclosing for the first time their financial contributions to physicians, other health care professionals and medical organizations and institutions by the end of June 2016.

- The collaboration between physicians and pharmaceutical companies is indispensable for the exchange of knowledge, the development of innovative pharmaceuticals and, therefore, the best possible treatment for patients.

- Based on the published contributions, the public will be able to understand how physicians and pharmaceutical companies work together.

Berlin, June 20, 2016. The member companies of vfa and FSA are implementing the Transparency Code to which they voluntarily committed and will publish their 2015 contributions to physicians, other health care professionals and medical organizations and institutions by the end of June 2016.

By publishing the total sum of contributions today, vfa and FSA give the starting signal for the publication phase of the individual sums by the companies. Overall, the sum of the 54 companies’ financial contributions to physicians, health care professionals and medical organizations for 2015 was about EUR 575 million (as of June 20, 2016).
The grand total includes approximately

- EUR 366 million to physicians, other health care professionals, medical organizations and institutions for the implementation of clinical trials and observational studies as part of research and development;

- EUR 119 million to physicians and other health care professionals for speaker fees and training seminars;

- EUR 90 million to medical organizations and institutions for sponsorship of events, donations and foundations.

Between June 20 and 30, the individual member companies of vfa and FSA will publish their contributions on their websites. If permitted by data privacy regulations, the companies will also individually disclose their contributions to individual physicians. This depends on the consent of the individual physician.

“We would like to better explain the necessity of collaboration between companies and physicians,” said vfa Director General Birgit Fischer. “This will enhance an understanding of the collaboration and its acceptance in the public and with patients. By implementing the code, the member companies of the vfa and the FSA voluntarily create far-reaching transparency regarding their contributions. Based on these figures, the public will be able to understand how physicians and pharmaceutical companies collaborate.”

Fischer continued: “The collaboration between research-based pharmaceutical companies and physicians is a prerequisite for the development of innovative pharmaceuticals and, therefore, the best possible treatment for patients. This is how medical progress is created.”

Physicians are important collaborative partners in clinical trials for the marketing authorization of pharmaceuticals. Observational studies, too, are an indispensable instrument in pharmaceutical research for both pharmaceutical companies and regulatory agencies and lead to a better understanding of a medicinal product in practical use. During such an observational study, the physician documents the therapy for patients who take a certain drug and provides the results in anonymized form to the manufacturer. Practical research is performed in specialized practices and clinics. For this work, physicians and clinics receive appropriate financial contributions from research-based pharmaceutical companies. With regard to continued education of physicians, pharmaceutical companies also feel
responsible for ensuring a continuous and topical exchange of knowledge at all times.

“Patients have a great interest in information regarding the financial contributions physicians receive from pharmaceutical companies,” said FSA Managing Director Dr. Holger Diener. “By disclosing these contributions, the companies voluntarily create the basis for an objective discussion on the collaboration between the pharmaceutical industry and physicians.”

“For the member companies of the vfa and the FSA, transparency is a supporting pillar of their collaboration with physicians,” Diener continued. “We started by publishing the contributions patient organizations receive from pharmaceutical companies. Here we sustainably succeeded in invalidating unfounded speculations, thereby building appreciation and trust. The publication of contributions to physicians is another systematic step in that direction.”

Background

The FSA was established by vfa member companies in 2004 as an independent association. Apart from the vfa companies, the FSA has a total of 54 member companies today. The FSA and the vfa represent 75 percent of the German pharmaceutical market for prescription drugs. With the help of an internal tribunal, the FSA monitors the correct collaboration of pharmaceutical companies with physicians and other health care professionals. Each individual can report a suspected code violation by a pharmaceutical company to the FSA. The independent arbitration board of the FSA will examine the suspected cases reported. If the suspicion is confirmed, the FSA’s rules require clearly defined sanctions, e.g. fines of up to EUR 400,000, public identification of the company and publication of the decision on the internet.

For more information on the transparency initiative, please visit www.vfa.de and www.pharma-transparenz.de.

The vfa is the trade association of the research-based pharmaceutical companies in Germany. It represents the interests of 45 globally leading pharmaceutical companies and their more than 100 subsidiaries and affiliated companies in the area of health, research and economic policy. The vfa member companies employ more than 76,000 people in Germany, including more than 16,000 in research and development.
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