

## Self regulation: some current issues in practice

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## What needs regulation?

- Promotion of products
- Public relations – targeting
  - health professionals
  - regulators/ politicians
  - the media
  - patients/ consumers
  - investors
- Research – on animals, healthy or ill people
- Conflicts of interest

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## Has self-regulation been tried?

- Promotion of products **yes**
- Public relations –
  - targeting health professionals **?**
  - regulators/ politicians **no**
  - the media **?**
  - patients/ consumers **?**
  - investors **?**
- Research – on healthy or ill people **no**

**So we must focus on promotion**

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### Regulating promotion in the UK

- The ABPI has run a regularly revised code of practice since 1958, reporting on all complaints. Sanctions are weak or absent.
- Breaches of the code were found in 63% of the 302 complaints considered in 1983-1988, about 100 breaches per year [BMJ 1990;300:307]
- Many companies offended repeatedly
- Ministers tolerated breaches of the Medicines Act – because self-regulation saved money?
- The reports have become detailed and legalistic, written to interest only insiders
- The net effect of this self-regulation remains small

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### Why is the effect unimpressive?

- It is seen to be the industry protecting itself, with the help of a few friends
- Possible conflicts of interest, when considered, are not clearly investigated and readily dismissed
- It looks like doing just enough to ward off genuinely independent regulation, with serious sanctions

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### In other countries?

Can participants speak about some of them?

■ Italy	■ Australia
■ Japan	■ Canada
■ New Zealand	■ France
■ USA	■ Germany

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**International self-regulation by IFPMA**  
[Internat. Federation of Pharma Manufacturers & Associations]

- Has existed formally since 1981
- Reports of its operation are not readily accessible
- Its procedures are slow and depend on long exchanges between distant parties
- what does IFPMA regard as the major achievements of its code since 1990?

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**A useful web site on drug promotion:**



[Http://www.nofreelunch.org](http://www.nofreelunch.org)  
[based in New York]

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