Dean’s Comments: Striking a Balance

In recent months, conflict of interest (COI) and conflict of commitment (COC) have become matters of public importance for physicians. Examples of such conflict include writing prescriptions of drug makers who have provided gifts or trips for doctors or the writing of clinical practice guidelines favorable to a product while receiving funds or favors from the product’s manufacturer.

Institutions around the U.S. have struggled to find an appropriate response to the problem – seeking a balance between impropriety and the ordinary commerce important to bring a product to market.

We will implement a new set of policies and procedures aimed at reducing the influence of the pharmaceutical industry and device manufacturers on educational content and clinical decision making as well as setting strong ethical and procedural standards for interactions between faculty and industry. These new policies ban our faculty from accepting gifts (including pens, pads, and other small gifts) and meals. The policies also significantly restrict the presence of industry representatives in clinical and teaching areas of the Health Science Center.

Additionally, there will be increased requirements for disclosure and oversight and more explicit parameters for the establishment and management of contracts between faculty and industry. These new policies and procedures will greatly reduce the opportunity for conflicts of interest that might adversely affect our teaching, research, and clinical activities. The policies will also have an effect on how our faculty participates in industry-sponsored activities at a national, regional, and local level. For example, the new policies prohibit our faculty from giving presentations for which they do not have full intellectual control over the content, effectively banning promotional speaking. Depending on the circumstance, our faculty may not be able to accept free meals at some Society events if these meals are linked to a promotional presentation.

We have adopted these new policies in order to insure that our Health Science Center remains an impartial and independent resource for our community. Physicians, scientists, and academic health centers have successfully collaborated with industry to develop and bring to market many new treatments, tests, and devices. However, the very success of these endeavors has contributed to many of the concerns that have recently been leveled at the health care industry, physicians, and academic medical centers. As the financial gain associated with the widespread use of a particular drug or device has increased, so have the financial stakes associated with the interpretation of the results of a clinical trial or the opinions expressed by thought leaders in scientific publications and presentations. These pressures led industry to become increasingly focused on managing the information about a treatment in order to maximize the impact on sales. Thought leaders and “high prescriber” physicians were actively courted by industry as part of marketing efforts aimed at increasing sales. These and other practices aimed at increasing sales led to many egregious examples of questionable behavior recently documented in the national news media.

These new policies for our faculty are born out of concern for the reasons listed above and for the simple fact that it is the right thing to do. Our policies are very much in line with those being adopted by other Schools of Medicine around the country. We hope that these steps will more clearly articulate our desire to promote and to model for our students and residents the highest standards of ethical and professional behavior.

William L. Henrich, M.D., M.A.C.P.
Dean, School of Medicine
Vice President for Medical Affairs
John P. Howe, III, M.D.,
Distinguished Chair in Health Policy
Pedro L. Delgado, MD
Chair, Department of Psychiatry
Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Professionalism

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After five distinguished years as the Director, Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute, Dr. Sharon B. Murphy has elected to step down later this spring. As the GCCRI founding Director, she has positioned GCCRI for greatness. Among her numerous laudable accomplishments are the following:

- establishing the Institute and attracting a cadre of talented investigators;
- providing stewardship for the Ambassador's Circle which serves as primary advocates and goodwill ambassadors for the GCCRI in the community;
- recruiting, in partnership with Dr. Tom Mayes, Dr. Gail Tomlinson, a widely recognized pediatric oncologist, to serve as the Deputy Director and as the Division Chief of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology in the Department of Pediatrics;
- and playing a significant role in attracting and implementing the transformational $25 million gift from Mr. Bill Greehey.

Please convey your gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Murphy for her efforts on behalf of the GCCRI and our Health Science Center.

The Continuing Medical Education (CME) Office would like to announce the following conferences:

3/5/08 – Conducting Clinical Research (co-sponsored by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Office of Clinical Research)

3/7-8/08 – 28th Annual Alamo City Ophthalmology Clinical Conference (sponsored by the Department of Ophthalmology)

3/24-4/4/08 – Join the Class 2008 (sponsored by the School of Medicine)

3/27-30/2008 – 31st Annual Family Practice Review Course (sponsored by the Department of Family & Community Medicine)

4/5/08 – 2nd Annual Pediatric Update, Laredo, Texas (sponsored by the Department of Pediatrics)

4/17-18/08 – Frontiers of Otolaryngology: Innovations in Rhinology and Laryngology (sponsored by the Department of Otolaryngology)

Please visit the CME website for more information. http://cme.uthscsa.edu/
The following alumnus, faculty, fellows, residents, staff and/or students appeared in the news (television, print media or radio): Dr. Mauli Agrawal, Orthopaedics; Dr. Steven Bailey, Medicine/Cardiology; Rose Ann Barajas, Pediatrics; Dr. Constance Barone, Neurosurgery; Dr. Ruth Berggren, Med./Infectious Diseases; Dr. Robin Brey, Neurology; Dr. David Cantu, Family/Community Med.; Dr. John Casada, Psychiatry; Drs. Cigarroa/Leo Vela, President/RAHC; Dr. Robert Clark, Clinical Research; Dr. Tyler Curiel, Oncology/Hematology; Dr. Daryl C. Currier, Alumnus; Dr. William “Burl” Daviss, Psychiatry; Dr Pedro Delgado, Psychiatry; Dr. Gerald Dodd, Radiology; Dr. Michael Escamilla, Psychiatry; Dr. Marc Feldman, Medicine/Cardiology;

Dr. Miguel Fernandez, Poison Center/Surgery; Dr. Sharon Fowler, Medicine; Dr. Frank Giles, Hematology/Med. Oncology; Dr. Lawrence Harkless, Former faculty; Dr. Carlos Jaen, Family/Community Med.; Dr. Daniel Hale, Pediatrics; Dr. Richard Holt, Otolaryngology; Dr. Carlos Jaen, Family & Community Medicine; Drs. Jaen/Bazaldua, Family & Community Medicine; Dr. Chris Johnson, Pediatrics; Dr. David Jones, Anesthesiology/SOM dean’s office; Dr. Nancy Kellogg, Pediatrics; Dr. Jason McKinney, Medicine/Edu. Programs; Dr. Claudia Miller, Family/Community Med.; Dr. Peter Nathanielsz, Obstetrics/Gynecology; Dr. Julio Palmaz, Radiology; Dr. Eric Pappert, Neurology; Dr. Juan Parra, General Pediatrics; Dr. Devang Patel, Medicine/Cardiology; Dr. Jan Patterson, Medicine; Dr. Paul Phillips III, Alumnus; Dr. Jacquelyn Pugh, General Medicine; Dr. Amelie Ramirez, Epidemiology/Biostatistics; Dr. Seenu Reddy, Surgery; Drs. Richardson/Sanchez-Reilly, Barshop Institute; Dr. Gustavo Roman, Medicine/Neurology; Dr. Charles Reasner, Medicine/Diabetes; Drs. Roman/Espino, Neurology/Fam.-Community Med.; Dr. Naohiro Shibuya, Orthopaedics; Dr. Vivek Singh, Psychiatry; Dr. Nathan Thomas, Alumnus; Dr. James Tysinger, Family/Community Med.; Dr. Richard Usatine, Family/Community Med.; Dr. Steven Wolf, Surgery

Dr. Kaye Wilkins, Orthopaedics, was voted the “Road Warrior” of the Year by American Airlines and won a million miles for travel which he is donating. He is on the cover of their magazine this month. Click on the link, www.americanwaymag.com.

Dr. Farook Thameem, Medicine/Nephrology, was a recipient of the 2007 Norman S. Coplon Extramural Grant, Satellite Healthcare, Inc.. This grant is awarded annually to individuals whose research focus on a broad range of aspects of kidney disease.

Dr. Basil Pruitt, Surgery, was selected as a co-winner of the King Faisal International Prize in Medicine. Read more...
The San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS) is held in this city every December. Since its founding 30 years ago by Drs. William L. McGuire and Charles A Coltman, Jr., it has grown from a one-day meeting held in a single conference room in a motel on Loop 410 to a 3 ½ day event which occupies almost the entire Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center downtown. In the beginning, attendance was primarily regional, and numbered less than 150. Today, half the attendance is drawn from more than 80 different countries and totals more than 8,400.

The objective of the SABCS is to provide state-of-the-art information on the experimental biology, etiology, prevention, diagnosis, and therapy of breast cancer and premalignant breast disease, to an international audience of academic and private physicians and researchers in medical, surgical, gynecologic, and radiation oncology, as well as other appropriate health care professionals.

The scientific program consists of invited lectures and mini-symposia by experts in clinical and basic research, selected slide and poster presentations chosen from the submitted abstracts, and case discussions. General sessions are 2-3 hours in duration and are the vehicle for presentations, which are allotted 10 minutes each followed by 5 minutes of discussion. Poster sessions are each 2 hours long.

This is a very exciting time in the historical evolution of the SABCS. We have just entered into a partnership with the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). Our new collaboration will bring to bear people and resources which will not only maintain the symposium’s position in the forefront of medical meetings, but also add exciting new elements to the program.

Among the new aspects which will be introduced in 2008 are new scholarships and travel awards for young investigators, fellows and students.

The 31st Annual San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium will take place December 11 – 14, 2008. Abstract submission opens in early March; deadline is June 15. You do not have to submit an abstract in order to register; all interested professionals are welcome!

SABCS also offers many resources based on the information presented at the symposium. Talks and slides are available as a streaming webcast and/or a downloadable podcast. Posters and abstracts are also available online. These and other resources can be accessed free on the SABCS website www.sabcs.org. The content remains available for 3 years. In addition one can order a CME-accredited CD-ROM, through the website.

SABCS is managed by the scientific symposia group which is part of the UTHSCSA Continuing Medical Education Department. Our staff has been responsible for production, funding and marketing of SABCS as well as the development and management of new conferences also targeted to the national and international medical community.

One of the most interesting of these new conferences is Drug Development Strategies in Oncology (DDSIO). The conference is designed to bridge the gap between academic and government drug developers and their industry counterparts and to provide a unique road map for navigating the changing landscape on oncology therapeutics in the modern age.

DDSIO is unique in that it brings together three groups:

- Academic clinicians, support staff and administrators interested in oncology drug development; individuals actively involved in academic-industry partnerships in Phase I clinical trials or on individuals and/or institutions interested in building such programs.
- Industry and biotechnology drug development specialists involved in oncology drug development; early development teams in industry.
- Government research or regulatory scientists involved in funding, overseeing or regulating oncology drug development and Phase I clinical trials.

The next DDSIO conference will take place October 10-11, 2008, at the Grand Hyatt San Antonio.

Richard Markow  
Symposium Director  
Office of Continuing Medical Education