



Drug companies are spending millions of pounds every year on all-expenses-paid trips to conferences around the world for doctors and other hospital staff, in what critics say is a massive **marketing exercise dressed up as medical education**.

Consumers International (CI) said the lack of transparency was unacceptable. "When a medical professional speaks on a health issue, we assume that they are putting patients' interests first. If that person has a conflict of interest because they or their organisation are receiving funding from a drug company the least we should demand is the right to know about it," said Justin Macmullan, head of campaigns. "Pharmaceutical companies will tell you that what they are funding is medical education. But our concern is that this is really highly effective, well-targeted marketing. This throws any notion of impartiality out of the window and jeopardises a doctor's ability to make an informed, balanced decision about the most appropriate treatments."

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