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**United States Senate**

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

BRUCE A. COHEN, *Chief Counsel and Staff Director*  
KOLAN L. DAVIS, *Republican Chief Counsel and Staff Director*

May 4, 2011

**Via Electronic Transmission**

Torry Mark Sansone  
Executive Director  
American Society of Hypertension, Inc.  
148 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

Dear Mr. Sansone:

In December 2009, I asked for an accounting of industry funding that American Society of Hypertension, Inc. (ASH) receives from pharmaceutical and medical device companies as well as foundations established by these companies or the insurance industry. I appreciate your response, which I have attached to this letter. I write today to follow up on any efforts by your organization to improve transparency and accountability in its relationships with the pharmaceutical and device industries.

As I stated in my previous letter, I started my inquiry, in part, as a result of accounts documenting the lack of transparency in financial relationships between the pharmaceutical industry and nonprofit health and medical organizations. Specifically, I cited the April 2008 article in *The Wall Street Journal*, which reported that industry representatives, including ten major drug companies, had formed a coalition to promote looser restrictions on off-label marketing.<sup>1</sup> The coalition had asked the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to speak in favor of this issue.

In response to my concerns in my April 2009 letter to NAMI, NAMI began to voluntarily disclose to the public any amount of funding exceeding \$5,000 that it received from pharmaceutical companies and foundations on its website. Further, NAMI began to provide a brief description of the purpose of the funding on its website. I commend NAMI for its leadership and had hoped that when I reached out to your organization and 32 others, your organization would follow NAMI's example and begin posting similar funding information on ASH's website.

As of the date of this letter, it appears that your organization has taken steps to identify on its website the corporate or industry sponsors and their range of funding support. However, the website does not specify the purposes of that funding. If ASH is currently taking steps to further

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<sup>1</sup> Alicia Mundy, "Off-Label Use of Drugs Gets a Push --- Big Pharma Lobbies Washington to Relax Rules on Marketing," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2008.

enhance the transparency of its financial relationships with the pharmaceutical and device industries, I would appreciate information regarding those steps. In particular, please state whether or not ASH will be adding information in the future about the purpose of the funding it receives. If not, please explain why not.

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) recommended in a report to Congress in March 2009 that Congress require that pharmaceutical and device companies report their financial relationships with physician groups, patient organizations, and others. More specifically MedPAC said the following:

Given the potential benefits of public reporting, we recommend that the Congress mandate the reporting of comprehensive information on industry relationships with physicians and other health care entities and that the Secretary post this information on a public searchable website.<sup>2</sup>

MedPAC then went on to say in Recommendation 5-1 that:

The Congress should require all manufacturers and distributors of drugs, biologicals, medical devices, and medical supplies (and their subsidiaries) to report to the Secretary their financial relationship with: . . . physician groups and other prescribers . . . patient organizations; and professional organizations.<sup>3</sup>

I look forward to working with you and other health and medical organizations to further increase sunshine on financial relationships.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention in this matter. I would appreciate a response by May 25, 2011. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Downey for the Committee on the Judiciary at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member

Attachments

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<sup>2</sup> Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, "Public reporting of physicians' financial relationships," Report to Congress: Medicare Payment Policy, March 2009.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

Attachment



*Committed to Eliminating Hypertension and Its Consequences*

December 21, 2009

**ASH BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Michael A. Weber, MD, Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Clinical Hypertension (JCH)

Myron H. Weinberger, MD, Editor-in-Chief, Journal of the American Society of Hypertension (JASH)

Torry Mark Sansone, Executive Director

The Honorable Senator Charles E. Grassley  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6200

Dear Senator Grassley:

*In response to the request you submitted to the American Society of Hypertension, Inc. (ASH) as outlined in your December 7, 2009 correspondence, I am providing the financial information requested, see attached file, ASH Revenue From Industry FY 06 through FY09 {Five Worksheets: "Summary FY2006-2009," Revenue from Industry FY2006, Revenue from Industry FY2007, Revenue from Industry FY2008, Revenue from Industry FY2009}.*

*In response to the five (5) questions you submitted, please note the following:*

**Question 1: Please describe the policies for accepting industry funding and whether or not ASH allows companies to place restrictions or provide guidance on how funding will be spent.**

*The Society is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), to provide continuing medical education (CME) activities.*

*The Society abides by the ACCME updated Standards for Commercial Support. In addition, the Society accepts, upholds and endorses the related guidelines of the American Medical Association (AMA), the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PhRMA), the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).*



*Committed to Eliminating Hypertension and Its Consequences*

The Society accepts funding from industry according to the ACCME Standards for Commercial Support, and in compliance with the guidelines of the organizations listed above. The Society accepts funding only under the terms, conditions, and specifications of the Society, and does not allow outside companies to place restrictions or to provide guidance on how funding will be spent.

Further, the Society has developed a guideline specifically describing the Society policies for industry funding, "American Society of Hypertension, Inc. (ASH) – Policy for Outside Source Funding." See attached file: ASH Policy for Outside Source Funding.

**Question 2: If ASH allows companies to place restrictions on industry funding, then please explain all restrictions and/or guidance for each transfer of value from industry. For every transfer of value with a restriction, please provide the following information: year of transfer, name of company, and restriction placed on funding.**

The Society does not allow companies to place restrictions on industry funding. Please see response to Question 1.

**Question 3: Please explain what policies, if any, that ASH plans to adopt to ensure transparency of funding in order to provide a greater public trust in the independence of your organization.**

The Society's Disclosure procedures and forms underwent a comprehensive review in 2005-2006. As a result, in summer 2006, new protocol, guidelines, and forms were established and implemented. These are periodically reviewed by the Board and other Society committees, and new forms were implemented after the September 2009 Board Meeting.

The Society's policy is to disclose all funding in relation to the activity or program for which the funding was granted. The Society believes that its protocol ensures transparency of funding.



*Committed to Eliminating Hypertension and Its Consequences*

**Question 4: Please explain your policies on disclosure of outside income by your top executives and board members.**

*The Society's Disclosure policy and forms underwent a comprehensive review in 2005-2006. As a result, in Summer 2006, new protocol, guidelines, and forms were established and implemented.*

*All Board Members and top executives are required to disclose outside income and other financial relationships by submitting an annual "Disclosure Form for Responsible Persons." Disclosure forms are filed for the previous calendar year.*

*The ASH Disclosure Policy and form are periodically reviewed by the Board and other Society Committees, and new forms were implemented in September 2009. The policy and forms have been linked to the ASH website.*

**Question 5: Please provide the disclosures of outside income filed with your organization by your top executives and board members.**

*See attached files with Disclosure Forms for ASH Responsible Persons for 2006, 2007, and 2008: Calendar Year 2006 Disclosures.pdf, Calendar Year 2007 Disclosures.pdf, Calendar Year 2008 Disclosures.pdf. In accord with Society protocol, ASH Disclosure Forms for 2009 are not submitted by ASH Responsible Persons until 2010.*

Sincerely,

Torry Mark Sansone  
Executive Director

REVENUE FROM INDUSTRY  
SUMMARY 2006-2009

		2006	2007	2008	2009
ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING		\$508,350.00	\$489,985.00	\$635,104.00	\$346,525.00
CORPORATE DUES		\$262,000.00	\$165,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$150,000.00
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES		\$3,373,334.56	\$3,189,305.48	\$3,256,846.40	\$4,004,509.00
DONATION		\$1,000.00	\$1,100.00	\$7,000	\$3,250.00
TOTAL		\$4,144,684.56	\$3,845,390.48	\$4,148,950.40	\$4,504,284.00

## TOTAL REVENUE RECEIVED FROM PHARMA FY 2006

	TOTAL GRANT RECEIVED	INDUSTRY	COMMENTS
ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING			
		SLACK, MERCK, LYNCH ASTRAZENCA, W.A. BAUM, ABBOTT LABS, RESPIRONICS, MYOGEN, WYETH, NOVARTIS, NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION, HUMANA PRESS, SUNTECH, BI. KOS, AND ENGINEERING, KENT SCIENTIFIC, NATURE AMERICA, RELANT, PFIZER, QUEST DIAGNOSTICS, INTERCURE, CANDORIUM, BMS, DIAGNOSTICS), BMS, TIBA MEDICAL, SPACE LABS MEDICALS, MEDIA ALERTS, THE HUMAN PRESS, ACTOR MEDICAL, INTEGRILIM, OMIRON, I.E.N., SANKYO PHARMA, CVT THERAPEUTICS, MICROLIFE, SANOFI AVENTIS, VASAMED	JOURNAL PUBLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC ABSTRACTS HOTEL KEYS PROGRAM BOOK REGISTRATION BAG LANYARDS FACULTY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/RECOGNITION EVENT
	273,350.00	GLAXOSMITHKLINE	EXHIBITS
	30,000.00	NOVARTIS - ADVANTAGE COMMUNICATIONS	
	5,000.00	NOVARTIS	
	65,000.00	NOVARTIS	
	40,000.00	SANOFI-AVENTIS	
	30,000.00	PFIZER - CLIVE DAVIS	
	65,000.00	NOVARTIS	
SUB TOTAL	508,350.00		
CORPORATE DUES			
	15,000.00	ABBOTT	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	ASTRAZENCA	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	BIOVALE	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	BRISTOL MYERS SQUIBB	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	FOREST	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	GLAXOSMITHKLINE	CORP DUES
	97,000.00	MERCK	CORP DUES AND EXHIBIT FEE
	15,000.00	NOVARTIS	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	PFIZER	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	SAIKYO	CORP DUES
	15,000.00	SENERIA	CORP DUES
SUB TOTAL	262,000.00		
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES:			
	323,600.00	NOVARTIS	SYMPOSIUM
	274,429.00	BRISTOL MYERS SWJIBB	SYMPOSIUM
	243,001.00	KING PHARMA	SYMPOSIUM
	204,987.00	NOVARTIS	SYMPOSIUM
	247,800.00	NOVARTIS	SYMPOSIUM
	215,243.00	CV THERAPEUTICS	SYMPOSIUM
	338,876.00	MERCK	SYMPOSIUM, SPECIAL POPULATION SEMINARS (AFRICAN AMERICAN, ASIAN, HISPANIC SEMINA
	74,865.08	PFIZER - ACADEMY FOR HEALTH CARE EDU	SYMPOSIUM
	76,800.00	FOREST-ADVANTAGE COMMUNICATIONS	SYMPOSIUM
	48,469.00	MERCK	SYMPOSIUM
	81,140.73	ASTRAZENCA- INNOVIA	SYMPOSIUM
	55,392.91	ABBOTT LABS- MEDIEMEDIA	SYMPOSIUM
	73,533.36	SANOFI	SYMPOSIUM
	65,992.15	GLAXOSMITHKLINE	SYMPOSIUM
	78,120.00	OMIRON	SYMPOSIUM
	76,800.00	SAIKYO	SYMPOSIUM
	14,906.33	BIOVAL	SYMPOSIUM
	155,495.00	BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM	ENDURING MATERIAL
	10,000.00	LEIQ	JCH SUPPLEMENT
	10,000.00	SCHWARTZ	ENDURING MATERIAL
	10,000.00	ABBOTT	ENDURING MATERIAL
	64,000.00	PFIZER- AXIUM	SYMPOSIUM
	128,000.00	PFIZER- AXIUM II	SYMPOSIUM
	269,634.00	BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM	SYMPOSIUM
	218,225.00	PFIZER	SYMPOSIUM
	13,035.00	BI	SYMPOSIUM
SUB TOTAL	3,373,334.56		
DONATIONS			
	1,000.00	FOREST	DONATION
SUB TOTAL	1,000.00		
TOTAL	4,144,684.56		



TOTAL REVENUE RECEIVED FROM PHARMA FY 2007			
	TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT	INDUSTRY	COMMENTS
ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING	\$15,000.00	BI	SCIENTIFIC AWARDS
		BAUM, DAICHI-SANKYO, ATTOR MEDICAL, INTECURE, NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION, NOVARTIS, OMRON, MERCK, GSK, TRANSOMA MEDICAL, ITAMAR MEDICAL, BMS, PFIZER, MICROLIFE, BI NATURE AMERICA, AAD ENGINEERING, HOMEDICS USA, MICRO MEDICAL, CVAX, DIASORIN, KING, HEMOCUE, MCMANON, CARDIODYNAMICS INTERNATIONAL, HESPERION, BIOMATE CORP, SPACELABS MEDICAL, LIPPINCOTT WILLIAMS & WILKINS, CYBERNUS MEDICAL, HDI, PDL	EXHIBITS PROGRAM BOOK LANYARDS REGISTRATION BAGS FACILITY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/RECOGNITION EVENT SPECIAL SEMINAR AFRICAN AMERICANS
SUB TOTAL	\$489,985.00		
CORPORATE DUES			
	\$15,000.00	ABBOTT	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	ASTRAZENZA	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	BRISTOL MYERS SQUIBB	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	FOREST	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	GSK	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	MERCK	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	NOVARTIS	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	PFIZER	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	SANKYO	CORP DUES
	\$15,000.00	SERVIER	CORP DUES
SUB TOTAL	\$165,000.00		
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES:			
	\$270,430.00	NOVARTIS	SYMPOSIUM
	\$172,300.00	DAICHI AND FOREST	SYMPOSIUM
	\$387,925.00	PFIZER	2 SYMPOSIA
	\$224,102.00	KING PHARMA	SYMPOSIUM
	\$234,939.00	BI	SYMPOSIUM
	\$237,095.00	NOVARTIS	SYMPOSIUM
	\$85,160.00	GILEAD	SYMPOSIUM
	\$85,865.92	FOREST	SYMPOSIUM
	\$371,000.00	MERCK	SYMPOSIUM AND ENDURING MATERIAL
	\$83,471.00	SANOFI - OED	SYMPOSIUM
	\$74,060.71	GLAXOSMITHKLINE	SYMPOSIUM
	\$80,666.85	BRISTOL MYERS SQUIBB	SYMPOSIUM
	\$25,000.00	FOREST	REVIEW COURSE
	\$15,000.00	BRISTOL MYERS SQUIBB MS-SANOFI AND	REVIEW COURSE
	\$100,000.00	DAICHI SANKYO	ENDURING MATERIAL
	\$20,000.00	FOREST	ENDURING MATERIAL
	\$362,340.00	DAICHI	SYMPOSIUM AND ENDURING MATERIAL
	\$6,000.00	AXIUM	SYMPOSIUM
	\$6,000.00	AXIUM	SYMPOSIUM
	\$149,000.00	PFIZER	SYMPOSIUM
	\$93,450.00	PFIZER	SYMPOSIUM
	\$99,500.00	DAICHI	SYMPOSIUM
SUB TOTAL	\$3,189,305.48		
DONATIONS			
	\$1,100.00	FOREST, ABBOTT	DONATION
SUB TOTAL	\$1,100.00		
TOTAL	\$3,845,390.48		



