
Today's News

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Many Experts Who Worked on Manual of Mental Disorders Have Ties to Drug Industry, Study Finds

By [AMY RAINEY](#)

More than half of the experts who prepared the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, an influential guide in the psychiatric field, have undisclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry, a study has found.

Of the 170 experts who contributed to the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's manual, almost all of whom are academics, 56 percent had financial associations with drug companies. Every member of the work groups that focused on mood disorders and psychotic disorders, for which most antidepressant and antipsychotic drugs are prescribed, have financial ties to the drug industry, according to the study, which was published on Thursday in the journal *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves drugs to treat only those mental illnesses that are defined in the manual, commonly known as the *DSM* and often referred to as the "bible of mental health."

The study found that 42 percent of the experts received research funds from the drug industry, 22 percent were consultants, and 16 percent served as members of a drug company's speakers' bureau.

Such findings illustrate the need for disclosing conflicts of interest in the *DSM*, said one of the study's authors, Lisa Cosgrove, a clinical psychologist at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

"The American Psychiatric Association should have a disclosure policy in the *DSM*, and I think they should try harder to find people who do not have ties to the pharmaceutical companies, especially multiple and continuous ties, to serve on their panel," she said in an interview on Thursday. "I just feel so strongly that the public and mental-health professionals should be aware of this."

The American Psychiatric Association will adopt a disclosure policy for the fifth edition of the *DSM*, due around 2011, said Darrell A. Regier, the association's director of research. (The current edition, the fourth, came out in 1994 and was revised in 2000.)

Dr. Regier said that the best experts for the *DSM* often are scientists who are part of the academic community but also work with the industry to develop new treatments.

"The assumption of the authors is that it's always a bad thing to have a relationship with the industry," Dr. Regier said. "Our assumption is that it may very well be a good thing."

Michael B. First, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia University who coordinated the development of the current edition of the *DSM*, agrees that there should be a disclosure policy. When the fourth edition came out, "the idea of disclosure and conflict of interest was just in its infancy," he said.

Dr. First added, however, that there is no evidence of drug companies' influence in the *DSM* and that a

system of checks and balances is set up to prevent just that.

Dr. First himself has a connection with the industry: Since the early 1990s, he has been paid to teach workshops at pharmaceutical companies on the use of a diagnostic instrument that he developed.

The study screened the experts for financial ties that occurred between 1989 and 2004. Some experts have argued that financial associations that took place after the publication of the *DSM* are irrelevant.

"The fact that some people who worked on it have since received money from drug companies in no way says anything about whether or not there was any influence from the pharmaceutical companies," Dr. First said.

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