

Drug and device firms paid \$6.5B to care providers

June 30 2015, by Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar

From research dollars to free lunches and junkets, drug and medical device companies paid doctors and leading hospitals nearly \$6.5 billion last year, according to government data posted Tuesday.

The latest update to the Open Payments database is part of an ongoing effort to highlight potential conflicts of interest in medicine. Unlike last year's initial version of the database, this one is much easier to use for consumers interested in looking up their own doctors.

Of the total payments, \$3.2 billion represented research funding, about \$2.6 billion was for miscellaneous items and about \$700 million represented investments and ownership stakes. Drug companies often recruit doctors to help with clinical trials and other research on particular medications.

About 80 percent of the total dollars went to doctors, whose prescribing decisions affect the fortunes of pharmaceutical and [medical device](#) manufacturers. Nearly 610,000 [doctors](#) received payments, as well as some 1,100 teaching hospitals.

Consumer groups say it's a step toward transparency. Doctors, hospitals and industry worry that context will be lost. The Open Payments program was created under President Barack Obama's [health care law](#).

More information: Open Payments database:
openpaymentsdata.cms.gov/

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