

The Independent Drug Education Act (IDEA) of 2008

Senate Sponsors: Kohl, Durbin, Kennedy and Casey

House Sponsors: Pallone and Waxman

The Problem

Currently, pharmaceutical sales representatives are one of the most common ways doctors receive information about the latest drugs on the market. However, most of the information they provide is designed to market their company's products, rather than serve as an unbiased source of data about the range of pharmaceutical treatments available to patients. With evidence showing that interaction with pharmaceutical sales representatives can impact doctors' prescribing patterns, it is important to ensure that physicians have access to independent information that is well-researched, comprehensive, and objective.

The Solution

Academic detailing programs send trained pharmacists, nurses, and other health care professionals into doctors' offices with independent data about the benefits, hazards, costs, and comparative effectiveness of the full array of pharmaceutical options for patient treatment, including low-cost generic alternatives.

Legislation to Create Academic Detailing Program

IDEA of 2008 would:

- **Fund grants or contracts through the HHS Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) to develop educational materials.**
 - The grantee or contractor would develop educational materials showing the relative safety, effectiveness, and cost of prescription drugs for the same use, including generic and over-the-counter alternatives. These materials would include brochures, handouts, and electronic information accessible to both patients and doctors.
 - Entities that can demonstrate clinical expertise in pharmaceutical research, such as medical and pharmacy schools and academic medical centers, would be eligible to apply.
 - Applicants may not receive financial support from any manufacturer of the drugs being reviewed.
 - AHRQ will review and approve the accuracy and effectiveness of the materials on a bi-yearly basis.
- **Fund ten grants or contracts through AHRQ to dispatch trained medical professionals into physicians' offices to distribute the educational materials.**
 - Public entities and nonprofit groups are eligible to apply for the grant or contract, as are other entities that can demonstrate the capacity to train and deploy the medical professionals to disseminate the materials.
 - Applicants may not receive financial support from any manufacturer of the products being discussed.
 - The grant or contract recipients will hire and train appropriate staff, identify health care providers who will be the recipients of the outreach, and evaluate the effectiveness of the program on both cost and prescribing behavior.
 - Regulations will also be in place to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the information being distributed, to prevent conflicts of interest, and to promote the effectiveness of the program.

The Cost

There is documented cost savings in the states that already have academic detailing programs in place. Analysis of a program in Pennsylvania found that drug expenditures for a single class of drugs were reduced by roughly \$120 per doctor per month. Among the heaviest prescribers, the reduction was \$378 per doctor per month. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine projected that for every dollar spent on academic detailing, two dollars can be saved in drug costs. A federal academic detailing program would likely pay for itself and create additional cost savings for the federal government, private insurers, and patients. Most importantly, it will help ensure that patients receive the most appropriate, highest quality treatment.