

The Truth  *About Health*

DRUG TEST OUTCOMES COULD BE BIASED

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Researchers recently conducted a study to test how thorough the safety and efficacy of drugs actually are. Results show bias sometimes enters the equation.

A series of articles were examined by researchers at Northwestern University to determine if an association existed between pharmaceutical company funding and the results of drug testing.

Results show that pharmaceutical company sponsorship of research is associated with the outcome of tests.

For example, a pharmaceutical company tests a drug for safety and efficacy. The results are usually favorable. But the outcomes are found less favorable on that same drug, when tested by a nonprofit research organization.

Study authors said the pharmaceutical companies were nearly eight times less likely to reach unfavorable conclusions than nonprofit organizations and 1.4 times more likely to reach favorable conclusions.

Also, one in five articles contained overstated results.

SOURCE: Great Life, March 2000; Friedberg M, et al. Evaluation of conflict of interest in economic analysis of new drugs used in oncology. JAMA. 1999; 282:1453-1457.