

The Truth  *About Health*

Psychiatry Professor Fails to Report Income from Major Drug Company

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Reported income discrepancies by a University of Texas System psychiatry professor could put the school at risk for receiving government funding in the future. According to a U.S. Senator's investigation, the professor has received as much as \$230,000 in payments from a major pharmaceutical company since 2000 while only reporting a fraction of that amount. The results of the investigation of her actions could put the University of Texas at risk for losing federal funding. It is reported that the institution has received some \$5 billion in research funds from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since the year 2000.

U.S. Senator Charles Grassley is continuing his investigation into payments received and reported by college professors around the United States. Last fall it was reported that Dr. Karen Wagner, a psychiatry professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, failed to disclose over \$150,000 in drug company income. The payments provided by the pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), the maker of Paxil and numerous other drug products, may actually be close to \$230,000.

"Between the years 2000 through 2005 GSK reported paying Dr. Wagner \$160,404. The only mention Dr. Wagner made of these payments was in 2005 when she reported \$600 from GSK," wrote Sen. Grassley in a letter to the University of Texas System.

Not only did the professor fail to report her income from GSK, she also declined to report her affiliation with the company while working on a NIH sponsored and funded drug trial. She did the same when working on a GSK sponsored study of Paxil to treat children with social anxiety disorder in October 1999. "In both cases, the forms asked Dr. Wagner to explain if she had a 'significant financial interest' for the proposed study, meaning interests valued at more than \$10,000," wrote Sen. Grassley. "On both forms, Dr. Wagner checked the box, 'I have no significant financial interest in any business enterprise or entity related to this sponsored project.'"

Sen. Grassley reports not knowing the dollar amount of Dr. Wagner's outside activities in 1999, but finds it interesting that she began making paid speaking appearances on behalf of GSK in January 2000. These engagements and the full amount of GSK reported payments to Dr. Wagner in 2000 totaled more than \$50,000. Dr. Wagner failed to disclose any of this money.

"However, in 2001, Dr. Wagner seems to have again failed to report her interest in GSK when she filled out a supplemental proposal for her NIH grant on Paxil to treat adolescents with depression. Again, Dr. Wagner indicated that she had 'no significant financial interest' regarding Paxil, even though GSK reports to me that they paid her over \$18,000 that year," wrote Sen. Grassley.

At this time, the University of Texas System is conducting an investigation into Dr. Wagner's activities. She continues to remain on the job during the probe. Dr. Wagner currently serves as the vice chairman of the psychiatry department of the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. At one point she also served on the school's Conflict-of-Interest Committee.

Source: U.S. Senate Committee on Finance. A Letter to the University of Texas System. May 2009.
http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/Grassley_to_UTex-Wagner2.pdf