WORKING WITH THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY POSITION STATEMENT

Background

Alzheimer’s Research UK’s Mission is to ‘help bring about a life changing treatment for dementia by 2025’. In order to achieve this mission, we fund the highest quality research across our four goals:

1. Understanding the diseases that cause dementia
2. Diagnose people earlier and more accurately
3. Reduce risk, backed by the latest evidence
4. Treating dementia effectively

The development of new medicines is a long, expensive and high-risk endeavour. It involves basic research, usually performed in universities, followed by drug discovery and development activities. The clinical trials to establish that potential new medicines are safe and effective are very expensive, especially the very large Alzheimer’s disease/ dementia trials required to have a new medicine approved by the regulatory authorities. The development cost of a new dementia treatment will be well in excess of £1 billion.

Alzheimer’s Research UK cannot develop treatments on our own. The pharmaceutical and biotech industry is an integral part of this process and that is why we co-fund early stage drug discovery with them through, for example, our Dementia Consortium.

In order to help achieve our Mission we recognise that we must also work on behalf of people with dementia to ensure they receive high-quality health care and that when new cost-effective treatments are found that these will be made available on the NHS. We need to engage with industry to do this, but crucially, in a way that ensures we hold them to account and represent the best interests of people with dementia.

How we work with Industry

In all of our interactions with the pharmaceutical industry we act with the upmost integrity to ensure our independence and to accurately represent people living with dementia. There are a number of ways in which we interact with the pharmaceutical industry and below we outline how we do this and explain the nature of our interactions:

1. Co-funding projects
We will accept funding for, or fund in partnership, specific projects that further the goals of the charity only if we have the independence to significantly influence the project and has the final decision on scope and direction. This allows us to deliver projects that we would otherwise not have the resources to deliver.

2. Advising the pharmaceutical industry
From time to time we are asked to provide information and advice to the industry. This can either be scientific advice, or advice on the policy landscape or healthcare environment.
We make a decision about our involvement in these discussions on a case-by-case basis. We engage where we think we can help shape thinking and action for the benefit of people living with dementia. This includes informing stakeholders on the landscape, holding industry to account and asking difficult questions, on topics such as pricing and access to a new treatment. Like doctors who work with industry, we are often offered consultancy fees to be part of these discussions.
To avoid any doubt about the independence of our advice Alzheimer’s Research UK does not accept such fees. We may accept expenses for travel and accommodation only. By taking this line, it also allows us to ensure we are attending the meeting for the benefit of our supporters and people with dementia.

3. Providing information or presentations at events
Occasionally we are invited to take part in conferences and forums that are sponsored by industry. Often these are excellent opportunities to reach a wide audience with important messages about dementia and our work. As long as there is no industry influence over the content of the presentation, we may accept payments for our time to prepare and present at the event. All such payments are used to further our charitable goals.

4. Sponsorship of Alzheimer’s Research UK events
We will accept sponsorship from the pharmaceutical industry, for example to help pay for our Annual Research Conference, as this gives us the opportunity to increase our reach and impact. Rules set out by the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) mean that the sponsor does not have any deciding influence over the event or conference being sponsored and this will always be a stipulation of any Alzheimer’s Research UK event that is sponsored. Organisations will have their brand recognised as a sponsor of the event and may attend as delegates but have no influence over the programme or organisation of the event.

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