

SEO Article - 480 words

Keywords: medical cover up, government incompetence, scientific accountability

Article Title:

Phantom Medicine: Who's responsible for your medications?

Article Summary:

Recent large-scale cover ups in the pharmaceutical industry have brought to light how the medical industry is no longer policing itself appropriately. The government has failed to protect us from propaganda that has the potential to kill. Scientific accountability is up for grabs until something can be done to stop medical ghostwriting.

Article Body:

Ghostwriting in the medical industry first came to light in 2004 with legal proceedings surrounding the prescription pain pill, Vioxx. In what essentially amounted to a **medical cover up** that endangered thousands, the pharmaceutical company Merck hired hundreds of so-called "ghostwriters" to spin the research results. The company even went so far as to employ these sorts of writers as reviewers of the initial publication. This led to a veritable whirlwind of falsified publications created by authors beholden to Merck's and Vioxx's success that lauded the virtues of Vioxx while hiding the deadly side effects.

Fortunately, reviews from legitimate members of the scientific community eventually uncovered the fraud, but situations like this raises questions concerning **scientific accountability**. The Merck articles were written by non-scientific employees, but nearly all listed an academic as the main author for publication. The scariest thing about medical ghostwriting is that the 2004 Vioxx suit was only the tip of the iceberg. Doubtless, the practice has been going on for decades. With the amount of money hanging in the balance, underhanded companies like Merck have been taking advantage of the crippled system for years.

Purportedly, there are measures in place that are to check for this sort of misconduct. Unfortunately, **government incompetence** has created a system that cannot neither locate the fraudulent articles nor take appropriate punitive action against those who perpetrate crimes such as these. The only reason the Vioxx scam ever came to light was because several patients taking it died from unexplained heart attacks which physicians blamed on the drugs. The patients' families met with lawyers, and a full-scale review of the **medical cover up** began.

The results were chilling.

Of the twenty research reports they analyzed, sixteen of listed Merck employees on the drafts, but once published, cited an academic as the lead author. Also examined were seventy-two article reviews. Fifty listed only scientists as authors, not the companies that were originally contracted for the work. The apparent breadth of the scandal was unimaginable, but it didn't end with the simple moral misjudgment of using credited authors—the Vioxx investigative team found more. Not only were the credited authors never involved in the research and reviews their names were tied to, they had neglected to disclose that for their cooperation, they had received compensation from Merck for their "work." Payment amounts ranged from \$750 to \$2500. This elevated the status of the case from simple misconduct to outright fraud. By loaning out their good names, these doctors removed put **scientific accountability** up for auction.

The **government's incompetence** cannot be tolerated any longer. As more lawsuits bring the evidence of this sort of behavior is brought to light, the consumer's confidence in pharmaceuticals has been deeply shaken. Action needs to be taken now to save the future of the industry before our trust in the scientific system of medical research is lost altogether.