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[Page S5029-S5033]

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PAYMENTS TO PHYSICIANS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, starting last year, I started looking at the financial relationships between physicians and drug companies. I first began this inquiry by examining payments from Astra Zeneca to Dr. Melissa DelBello, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Cincinnati.

In 2002, Dr. DelBello published a study that found that Seroquel worked for kids with bipolar disorder. The study was paid for by Astra Zeneca, and the following year that company paid Dr. DelBello around \$100,000 for speaking fees and honoraria. In 2004, Astra Zeneca paid Dr. DelBello over \$80,000.

Today, I would like to talk about three physicians at Harvard Medical School--Drs. Joseph Biederman, Thomas Spencer, and Timothy Wilens. They are some of the top psychiatrists in the country, and their research is some of the most important in the field. They have also taken millions of dollars from the drug companies.

Out of concern about the relationship between this money and their research, I asked Harvard and Mass General Hospital last October to send me the conflict of interest forms that these doctors had submitted to their institutions. Universities often require faculty to fill these forms out so that we can know if the doctors have a conflict of interest.

The forms I received were from the year 2000 to the present. Basically, these forms were a mess. My staff had a hard time figuring out which companies the doctors were consulting for and how much money they were making. But by looking at them, anyone would be led to believe that these doctors were not taking much money. Over the last 7 years, it looked like they had taken a couple hundred thousand dollars.

But last March, Harvard and Mass General asked these doctors to take a second look at the money they had received from the drug companies. And this is when things got interesting. Dr. Biederman suddenly admitted to over \$1.6 million dollars from the drug companies. And Dr. Spencer also admitted to over \$1 million. Meanwhile, Dr. Wilens also reported over \$1.6 million in payments from the drug companies.

The question you might ask is: Why weren't Harvard and Mass General watching over these doctors? The answer is simple: They trusted these physicians to honestly report this money.

Based on reports from just a handful of drug companies, we know that even these millions do not account for all of the money. In a few cases, the doctors disclosed more money than the drug companies

reported. But in most cases, the doctors reported less money.

For instance, Eli Lilly has reported to me that they paid tens of thousands of dollars to Dr. Biederman that he still has not accounted for. And the same goes for Drs. Spencer and Wilens.

What makes all of this even more interesting is that Drs. Biederman and Wilens were awarded grants from the National Institutes of Health to study the drug Strattera.

Obviously, if a researcher is taking money from a drug company while also receiving Federal dollars to research that company's product, then there is a conflict of interest. That is why I am asking the National Institutes of Health to take a closer look at the grants they give to researchers. Every year, the NIH hands out almost \$24 billion in grants. But nobody is watching

[[Page S5030]]

to ensure that the conflicts of interest are being monitored.

That is why Senator Kohl and I introduced the Physician Payments Sunshine Act. This bill will require companies to report payments that they make to doctors. As it stands right now, universities have to trust their faculty to report this money. And we can see that this trust is causing the universities to run afoul of NIH regulations. This is one reason why industry groups such as PhRMA and Advamed, as well as the American Association of Medical Colleges, have all endorsed my bill. Creating one national reporting system, rather than relying on a hodge-podge of state systems and some voluntary reporting systems, is the right thing to do.

Before closing, I would like to say that Harvard and Mass General have been extremely cooperative in this investigation, as have Eli Lilly, Astra Zeneca and other companies. I ask unanimous consent that my letters to Harvard, Mass General, and the NIH be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows: