

ANONYMOUS v JANSSEN-CILAG

Alleged inappropriate hospitality

An anonymous complaint was received about inappropriate hospitality alleged to have been provided by three pharmaceutical companies, one of which was Janssen-Cilag.

The complainant alleged that a few psychiatrists under the name of 'West Midland Research Group' had been using pharmaceutical companies for their personal advantages, ambitions and growth. The group organised one meeting a year and called it an international conference. There was no scientific committee, no invitation for research abstracts or poster. The group invited whom it wanted to. Until last year the registration fee was very little, about £15. Delegates were allowed to have free hotel, food and an evening cultural programme. It was inappropriate hospitality at the expense of pharmaceutical companies. Even delegates might not be aware that pharmaceutical companies had given money.

The Panel noted that there were some differences between the programme for the 2007 meeting submitted by Janssen-Cilag and that provided by the complainant.

No specific allegations had been made about other meetings. Janssen-Cilag had provided details of its interactions with the West Midlands Research Group.

In relation to the 2007 meeting, Janssen-Cilag would pay £2,000 sponsorship towards the hire of the venue, audiovisual equipment, speaker expenses plus the cost of one of the speakers. Janssen-Cilag had not sponsored any delegates to attend.

The Panel considered that according to the programme, the scientific/educational content was not unreasonable for sponsorship by a pharmaceutical company. The meeting appeared to be primarily scientific/educational. The programme referred only to 'Dinner' each evening. The Panel noted the allegations about the cultural musical event. There was no mention of this on the programme. It considered that if there was to be such entertainment then it would be inappropriate for a pharmaceutical company to sponsor it.

There was no evidence that Janssen-Cilag's sponsorship had paid for or subsidised a music programme as alleged. On the limited information before it the Panel considered that Janssen-Cilag's sponsorship of the meeting as described was not unacceptable and thus no breach was ruled.

An anonymous complaint was received about inappropriate hospitality alleged to have been provided by three pharmaceutical companies, one of which was Janssen-Cilag Ltd.

COMPLAINT

The complainant stated that a few psychiatrists under the name of 'West Midland Research Group' had been using pharmaceutical companies for their personal advantages, ambitions and growth. They had organised a conference and taken money from pharmaceutical companies for it. In fact nobody knew what West Midland Research Group was as no research was conducted or published by this group and there was no research grant or funding available for this group. The group organised one meeting a year and called it an international conference. There was no scientific committee, no invitation for research abstracts or poster. The group invited whom it wanted to. Until last year the registration fee was very little, about £15. Delegates were allowed to have free hotel, food and an evening cultural programme. It was inappropriate hospitality at the expense of pharmaceutical companies. Even delegates might not be aware that pharmaceutical companies had given money.

The few psychiatrists used this money to invite speakers who they wanted to oblige and they were friendly. They paid their fare, speaker fees, and hotel expenses. They used pharmaceutical company money for hospitality of delegates who seemed to be their friends and repeatedly attended their conference. They all enjoyed the evening cultural programme. It was like an annual get-together for them.

The group had taken money from Janssen-Cilag. One of the organisers maintained the data base of most of the Asian and Arabic psychiatrists. It was a number game. They had numbers to influence pharmaceutical companies and pharmaceutical companies tried to oblige vulnerable psychiatrists who could increase the prescriptions.

The pharmaceutical companies wanted to sell their medicines and it was a good nexus to have mutual benefits. It was worth investigating.

More or less the same delegates attended their other meetings such as south Asian forum meeting. The majority of delegates were the same every year. It was indicated that money was paid directly to 'west midland research group' and they used this money as they wanted for cultural programmes, hotel and other expenses.

Delegates were motivated by the free hotel and sense of holiday; until last year they were allowed to bring their family, meeting common friends and enjoying night cultural programme.

Organisers benefited by trying to influence and build up relationship with world prominent psychiatrists

who they invited as speakers and then used them for personal growth. They got impressed by seeing a large number of psychiatrists.

The motivating factor for pharmaceutical companies was taking advantage of numbers and trying to sell their medicines.

When writing to Janssen-Cilag, the Authority asked it to respond in relation to Clauses 2, 9.1 and 19.1 of the Code.

RESPONSE

Janssen-Cilag denied any breaches of Clauses 2, 9.1 and 19.1 and contended that the meetings referred to were of a high scientific standard, worthy of support, and provided a valuable educational benefit to members of the West Midlands' psychiatry community who attended.

The anonymous complaint was remarkably similar to a previous anonymous complaint about a legitimate educational meeting arranged by the South Asian Forum (Case AUTH/1897/10/06) to which Janssen-Cilag responded and was found not in breach of the Code. Janssen-Cilag believed this complaint to be vexatious toward the West Midlands Research Group (and supportive pharmaceutical companies).

Janssen-Cilag explained that the Midlands Psychiatric Research Group (MPRG) and the West Midlands Research Group were the same entity. The group had evolved over the past few years, and as well as holding small academic sessions, now held annual meetings, the latest of which was the forthcoming meeting in Coventry; known as the Midlands Psychiatric Research Group International Seminar; it was due to be held in June 2007.

The seminar was organised by the MPRG in collaboration with the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR) and the Section on Developing Countries of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) and was of a high scientific standard, indeed the President elect of the WPA, (from Italy), was to be a guest speaker talking on the 'Current Problems of Diagnosis in Psychiatry'. In addition, other eminent and internationally known speakers from the USA and the UK were also due to present at the meeting.

Janssen-Cilag provided a copy of the latest draft of the scientific programme and noted that although meal times ie lunch and dinner were indicated, there was no social agenda of music, dance or cultural programme as alleged by the complainant.

The forthcoming international seminar was open to any health professional practising mental health, mainly, but not exclusively, in the West Midlands. The organisers had advised Janssen-Cilag that it accepted and encouraged registration of all those who wished to participate, notwithstanding that places were limited, and applicants were accepted on a first come, first

served basis. Information regarding the meeting was sent to those individuals who had attended previous meetings, and also the meeting details were circulated to other groups of psychiatrists. In addition information on the international seminar was at different educational events in the West Midlands for general information.

In terms of the geographic location of origin of the delegates, in addition to psychiatrists working in the Midlands region, the meeting attracted about 30% of its participants from other parts of the country and also some overseas delegates.

For the forthcoming meeting, Janssen-Cilag would provide £2,000 sponsorship towards the hire of the venue, audiovisual equipment hire, and speaker expenses. In return Janssen-Cilag could erect a promotional stand at the meeting. The venue for the meeting was Coventry.

For this year's international seminar, Janssen-Cilag would also sponsor a speaker, a consultant in psychiatry and research fellow from a UK university. An honorarium of £950 would be paid directly to this speaker by Janssen-Cilag; the title of the lecture would be 'Long Acting Injectable Anti-psychotic Medication'.

In 2006, Janssen-Cilag sponsored that year's international seminar, also held in Coventry, with a £2,000 grant and also sponsored an international speaker from Canada who spoke on 'Schizophrenia: Compliance and Long-term Outcome'

Janssen-Cilag provided further details of the 2006 and 2005 meetings.

Janssen-Cilag had not sponsored any delegates to attend (other than the two speakers already identified for the 2006 and 2007 meetings), nor was Janssen-Cilag organising the meeting directly and was therefore not able to provide precise costs for the venue. Janssen-Cilag suggested however, that a £2,000 contribution towards venue hire and audiovisual support was not excessive within the overall framework of these international seminars.

Janssen-Cilag contended that the MPRG was a bona fide professional organisation; its annual international seminar was of a high standard, with the content pertinent to health professionals practising mental health. Its meetings attracted high calibre international speakers, and also, as delegates, many psychiatrists and other health professionals from predominantly, but not exclusively, the West Midlands. Janssen-Cilag considered that such meetings deserved support and submitted that the manner in which it had supported them did not contravene the Code. Janssen-Cilag therefore denied breaches of Clauses 2, 9.1, or 19.1.

PANEL RULING

The Panel noted that there were some differences between the programme submitted by Janssen-Cilag and that provided by the complainant. The Panel noted

that the 2007 meeting was to start on the evening of 14 June with a lecture and dinner. According to the programme provided by Janssen-Cilag, the programme for Friday 15 June ran from 9.30am until 4.45pm and the arrangements for Saturday were similar, 9.30am until 5pm. There were small differences in timing in the agenda provided by the complainant.

The programme provided by Janssen-Cilag stated that AstraZeneca, Janssen-Cilag, Lilly, Lundbeck, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Wyeth were providing educational grants.

The Panel noted that the complainant included the programme for the 2007 meeting. No specific allegations had been made about other meetings. Janssen-Cilag had provided details of its interactions with the West Midlands Research Group.

The 2007 meeting was to be held in Coventry. Janssen-Cilag would pay £2,000 sponsorship plus the cost of one of the speakers. Janssen-Cilag had not sponsored any delegates to attend. The £2,000 was towards the hire of the venue, audiovisual equipment hire and speaker expenses.

The Panel considered that according to the programme, the scientific/educational content was not unreasonable for sponsorship by a pharmaceutical company. The meeting appeared to be primarily scientific/educational. The programme referred only to 'Dinner' each evening. The Panel noted the allegations about the cultural musical event. There was no mention of this on the programme. It considered that if there was to be such entertainment then it would be inappropriate for a pharmaceutical company to sponsor it.

There was no evidence that Janssen-Cilag's sponsorship had paid for or subsidised a music programme as alleged. On the limited information before it the Panel considered that Janssen-Cilag's sponsorship of the meeting as described was not unacceptable and did not breach Clause 19.1. The Panel did not consider that there had been breaches of Clauses 2 and 9.1.

Complaint received	27 April 2007
Case completed	21 May 2007