



23rd October 2008

Sandra Coney
Chairperson
PHARMAC Consumer Advisory Committee
P O Box 10254
WELLINGTON

Dear Sandra

Consultation on the Draft Voluntary Checklist for Health Consumer Organisations Entering into Health Industry Sponsorship

The Researched Medicines Industry Association (RMI) understands that the PHARMAC Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) is seeking feedback regarding a draft voluntary checklist for health consumer organisations considering health industry sponsorship.

The RMI is disappointed that the CAC has not directly sought input or comment from the pharmaceutical industry during the development of the checklist.

The RMI is the professional and trade organisation of New Zealand's research-based pharmaceutical industry. Prescription medicines play a vital role in the prevention, amelioration and treatment of disease and the industry is committed to assisting New Zealanders in achieving these benefits through the safe and quality use of medicine. In addition to our representative and advocacy functions the RMI works to promote and ensure ethical behaviour and the highest standards via the RMI Code of Practice.

The RMI Code of Practice reflects the industry's commitment that any activity by a company in its engagement with health professionals or the general public must not discredit or reduce confidence in the pharmaceutical industry. While sponsorship of charities and patient groups is not explicitly dealt with by the Code, this principle is fundamental to our accepted standards of behaviour and the RMI would take seriously the matter of any company engaging inappropriately with a consumer or patient group.

The RMI, therefore, supports the Guiding Principles listed in the Draft Checklist.

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However, the RMI is concerned that the health industry appears to have been singled out when considering the theoretical issue of inappropriate influence on health consumer groups. It could equally be argued that the same situation applies when health consumer groups accept money from other corporate sources, the Government, or its agencies either as a grant or through commercial arrangements.

The RMI recommends that any checklist for consumer health organisations entering into sponsorship arrangements should encompass all funding sources, not just the health industry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Shirley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Shirley
Chief Executive Officer