



Paper #44

Are Financial Conflicts of Interest for the Surgeon a Source of Concern for the Patient?

Paul H. Yi, MD, Michael B. Cross, MD, Staci R. Johnson, MEd,
Ryan M. Nunley, MD, Craig J. Della Valle, MD

Introduction: Conflict-of-interests (COI) resulting from financial relationships between orthopaedic surgeons and industry are a potential source of public distrust. The purpose of this study was to determine patients' attitudes towards financial relationships between orthopaedic surgeons and the orthopaedic industry.

Methods: 269 Consecutive patients were surveyed at two academic centers using an anonymous, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed in conjunction with an expert in survey design using cognitive interviewing to ensure question clarity and patient comprehension; a 5-point Likert scale was utilized to assess patient attitudes. Financial relationships examined included 1) being paid as a consultant, 2) receiving research funding, and 3) receiving royalties for product design. Fisher's Exact Test was used to compare patient attitudes towards the three types of financial relationships.

Results: 218 patients completed the questionnaire (81% response rate). For all three potential COI, the majority of patients perceived these relationships favorably, with nearly 75% agreeing that such surgeons are the top experts in their fields. Further, two-thirds felt that surgeons engaged in such relationships to serve their patients better and felt that they would treat their patients the same as those not having a financial relationship. 87% Agreed that orthopaedic companies cannot make good products without working with surgeons, however, >80% believed that these relationships would result in the surgeon being more likely to use that company's products. Patients viewed surgeons who designed products more favorably than those who were consultants ($p = 0.03$). 74% Agreed that these relationships should be disclosed to patients and 62% expressed that patients should be at least somewhat concerned about these relationships.

Conclusion: Discussion and Conclusion The majority of patients view relationships between orthopaedic surgeons and industry favorably. Given patients' desires to be told about their surgeons' financial relationships and their favorable perceptions of these relationships, open and frank discussions about them is appropriate.
