

PROFESSION**Eli Lilly reports \$48 million in first-quarter physician payments**

The drugmaker spent \$3.8 million on business meals and travel for doctors and health care organizations.

By **KEVIN B. O'REILLY**, *amednews* staff. *Posted Aug. 12, 2011.*

Eli Lilly and Co. joined several other leading pharmaceutical companies by making public what it pays physicians and health care organizations for clinical research, speaking, consulting and advising work.

Eli Lilly, the maker of Prozac, Cymbalta and other drugs, in August reported a total value of \$48.1 million in the first quarter for the payments and noncash items such as food, travel and educational materials provided to doctors and the health care organizations they work for. The total fell just short of the \$48.3 million in first-quarter physician payments that the top-selling drugmaker Pfizer Inc. reported in June.

Of the \$48.1 million Eli Lilly spent in the first quarter, \$30.4 million paid for research, the Indianapolis-based drugmaker said. Nearly \$14 million, or 28%, went to educational programs. Eli Lilly spent \$2.1 million on business travel for physicians doing consulting, speaking, advising or research work the firm. An additional \$1.7 million, or 4%, went for business meals such as food provided at physician offices and medical conferences.

The company's website offers an explanation of why Eli Lilly pays so much money to physicians and features a video commentary by Jack Harris, MD, vice president for Lilly's U.S. medical division.

"While at Lilly we have many experts who have worked here for years and are trained and have developed a great deal of expertise, the problems we're trying to deal with and the medical scourges we are trying to solve are so complex that many times we need to engage the help of external experts," Dr. Harris said in the video. "These are thought leaders in their field who have a lot to bring to help us do our job better. The ultimate beneficiary of all this work is the patient who benefits from the products we develop."

Sharing payment information publicly could help build trust with patients, said Lilly spokesman J. Scott MacGregor.

"Our approach to the way we work with physicians is that everything we're doing is pointed to helping physicians treat their patients," he said. "Allowing the public to see for the first time some of the things that go into that on the research side and the commercial side is important to help move that work forward. We think it will actually clear up questions the public will have."

More sunshine coming

Eight other drugmakers have publicly reported some physician payments, often in compliance with settlement agreements with the Dept. of Justice. In 2009, Eli Lilly entered into a corporate integrity agreement with the Dept. of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General that requires the company to publicly report physician payments. Lilly paid a \$1.4 billion fine to the Dept. of Justice related to allegations of off-label marketing of the schizophrenia drug Zyprexa (olanzapine).

Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, doctors who receive payments of \$10 or more from any medical industry firm will have the information listed on a publicly searchable website starting Sept. 30, 2013.

The provision is consistent with the American Medical Association's general principles on transparency, but the Association said it is working to ensure that physicians have the opportunity to review and correct information before it is reported so it does not mislead patients. The AMA also will monitor the law's effect on industry support of continuing medical education and medical research, and push for complete federal preemption of state laws.

Eli Lilly's physician payment information is available at a new website (www.lillyphysicianpaymentregistry.com/). Physicians and health care companies can be searched by name, and the site shows the total each received for research, education, and business meals and travel. The information will be updated quarterly. Physicians who believe that payments to them have been listed inaccurately can call the company's dedicated health professionals line at 877-237-8197.

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