

Pharma companies to follow govt selling code from Jan 1

12 January 2015 | News | By Rahul Koul Koul

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From January 01, 2015, the murky affairs in pharma industry are officially under surveillance. The code of conduct put by the government will be reviewed after six months in case it is not implemented in a desired way. In the future, government is also considering to make it mandatory.

Generally as part of their strategy to achieve sales targets, the doctors are offered freebies, cruise tickets, paid vacations and sponsorships by pharmaceutical companies. The pharma industry also at the moment has a not so effective self-regulatory code that have been in place to control unethical sales promotion. Industry body IDMA, representing certain domestic companies and OPPI, which represents MNCs, have their own "self-regulatory" codes.

As per sources, the code specifies that any seminar, conference or meeting organized by a pharma company for promoting a drug or disseminating information, attended by medical practitioner will be on own cost. It further says that gifts for the personal benefit of healthcare professionals and family members (both immediate and extended) such as tickets to entertainment events are also not to be offered or provided by pharma companies, nor cash or monetary grants for individual purposes. Hospitality should also not be extended to any doctor or their family members.

Referring to the earlier communication to industry associations sent out over two years back in March 2012, the department of pharmaceuticals says in the letter that the Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices has been finalized after inputs by various stakeholders, and would be again reviewed six months after its implementation from January 1, 2015. The industry associations have to upload the Uniform Code on their websites and will be responsible for informing its members, and the government in case of violations. The code also adds that "where there is any item missing, the code of MCI as per the Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulation, 2002 as amended from time to time, will prevail".