

Researched Persuasive Writing and Speaking

Big Pharmaceuticals Create More Clients

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Americans currently have a penchant to self-diagnose and seek unnecessary help for diseases they may not actually have, which has been exacerbated by the rise of medical websites and the prevalence of drug advertisements. This hunger for medical information can be either utilized for education or exploited for financial gain. Big pharmaceutical companies create more clients than cures as they have shifted their focus towards generating profits, demonstrated by their spending and their advertising.

Big pharmaceutical companies prioritize the creation of clients by convincing people that they have a need or medical issue requiring a medication. Strategies to accomplish this include direct-to-consumer (DTC) marketing (TV, radio, and digital media advertisements) designed to make consumers aware of and active in pursuing further information about the drugs being marketed. To illustrate the impact of DTC marketing, “drugs with DTC ads had nine times more prescriptions than those that did not” (Llamas, 2019). In 2015, “a record-breaking \$5.4 billion [was spent] on DTC ads”, and in the same year, “Americans spent a record \$457 billion on prescription drugs” (Llamas, 2019). Furthermore, “for every dollar spent on advertising to consumers, sales of prescription drugs rose \$4.40” (Llamas, 2019). These increased marketing efforts result in increased demand for drugs and overprescribing for medication that may not be necessary or has marginal benefits. Thus, big pharmaceutical companies generate clients by using DTC marketing to create a perception of need, which then requires their medication as the solution.

Additionally, pharmaceutical companies are private, for-profit entities and thus prioritize increasing sales over improving quality of life. The pharmaceutical industry

argues that it must compensate for the cost of research and development (R&D), which leads to sharp increases in drug prices over time. However, drug costs in the United States are higher than other Western countries with “list prices in other developed countries [averaging] 41 percent of US net drug prices” (Yu, 2017). In fact, it was found that “the premiums pharmaceutical companies earn... generate substantially more than the companies spend globally on their research and development” (Yu, 2017). Thus, fewer patients are able to access or purchase drugs they need due to the excessively high cost of treatment. In this sense, raising drug prices to generate higher profits is counterintuitive to what the purpose of the pharmaceutical industry should be: to discover cures accessible to all who need them. As companies raise their drug prices, they simultaneously spend “much more money on sales and marketing than on R&D” (Llamas, 2019). This exhibits that pharmaceutical companies’ true priorities are where their money is allocated: in marketing to drive greater profitability rather than seeking treatments and making them affordable.

Because big pharmaceutical companies have shifted their resources away from R&D and towards increasing sales and producing revenue, they entice more people to be clients dependent on treatments of marginal benefit rather than providing necessary therapies. While pharmaceutical breakthroughs have led to some fantastic outcomes, at what cost will the American people, the clients, continue to feed big pharmaceuticals’ piggy banks?

References

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