

# Influence of Pharmaceutical Companies on Medication Prescribing: Views of Physicians



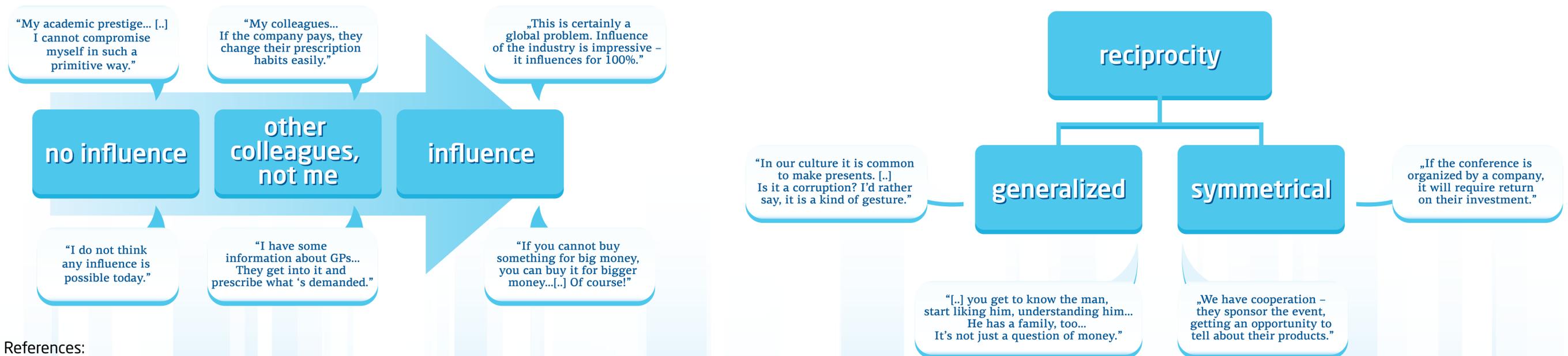
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Influence of the pharmaceutical industry on medication prescribing has been reported by many studies worldwide (Wazana, 2000; Spurling et al. 2010; Robertson, Rose, & Kesselheim, 2012). A concern that the commercial imperative of the industry may conflict with physicians' independence and professional integrity exists. It has also been admitted that not only substantial financial rewards or support, but also small gifts can shape one's behaviour. In the current study we explore how probability of influence of pharmaceutical industry on medication prescribing is perceived by physicians.

We found three types of perceptions. The first group is best described as deniers of any influence on medication prescribing patterns, referring to the academic status, critical thinking or a rigorous regulation system. The second group of physicians possesses "the illusion of unique invulnerability" (HAI & WHO, 2011). It is confirmed by the studies to be rather common for individuals not to acknowledge their vulnerability to any influence. The third group admitted that financial benefits (e.g. sponsorship, conference travelling, small gifts, etc.) provided by the pharmaceutical industry may have an effect on theirs, as well on other physicians' prescribing behaviour.

Basis for social relationship is not always grounded in self-interest, but may also root in the principle of reciprocity. Consistent with the typology of reciprocity (Sahlins, 1972), the current study marks out generalized and symmetrical reciprocity traits. Generalized reciprocity refers to the situations, when material side of the transaction is repressed by the social side, and symmetrical reciprocity is present in situations when balanced change of benefits occurs. The study data also discloses certain characteristics of Exchange theory (Homans, 1961) - the stimulus proposition provides for parties to engage in similar actions in the future, if they find them rewarding. The practices of sponsoring conferences and events in exchange for receiving opportunity of product promotion are often established on long-term cooperation basis. The aggression - approval proposition is revealed in situations when individuals feel disadvantaged in terms of distributive justice, e.g. , conference travelling is characterized by the lack of clear criteria for participant selection - it is often claimed to be set on the basis of personal contacts and subjectivity.

The ideas revealed by the current study provide empirical insights into perceptions of the physicians, marking out both potential relationship bias and also demonstrating perceived usefulness of mutual cooperation and benefit exchange in the current economic situation.



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