

# *Prescription Policy Choices*

## NEWS RELEASE

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## CHEERLEADERS VS. CLINICIANS: WHERE DO YOU WANT YOUR DOCTOR GETTING INFORMATION ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?

*Concord, February 11, 2008* – A force of 90,000 pharmaceutical sales representatives – many with no clinical background beyond a few weeks of on-the-job-training – are advising your doctor on what drugs to prescribe you and your family. You may have seen them in your doctor’s waiting room. Most of them are quite attractive. Some of them are recruited directly from cheerleading squads. Financially rewarded for pushing the newest and most expensive drugs, their focus is on sales volumes – not necessarily appropriate prescribing. To help win over doctors, they come bearing meals, gifts and other inducements.

A group of leading medical professionals, health educators, policy makers and advocates think there is a better way to keep your doctor up-to-date on prescription drugs. The group will meet for the first time on February 11\* in Concord, New Hampshire as part of Prescription Policy Choices’ initiative to advance an objective, scientific approach to educating physicians known as “academic detailing.” The group will hear presentations on existing academic detailing programs in Pennsylvania, Vermont, South Carolina and abroad, as the first steps toward developing a collaborative academic detailing program in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Academic detailing replaces the salesperson in your doctor’s office with a clinician. Highly-educated healthcare professionals speak to your doctor about the complete body of evidence concerning which drugs are safest and most appropriate in a given situation. The focus is on quality and safety.

Prescription Policy Choices’ academic detailing initiative is part of a national movement to counter the harmful effects of excessive pharmaceutical industry marketing. Such marketing adds unnecessary billions to our nation’s drug expenditures each year. It also pushes rapid adoption of the newest – and least time-tested – drugs which can result in tragedies for thousands of people such as those harmed by the painkiller Vioxx.

Northern New England’s leadership surrounding prescription drugs is reflected in recent legislation such as laws requiring the monitoring of industry gifts and payments to physicians (in Maine and Vermont) and laws limiting industry access to data on physicians’ prescribing practices (in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire) - data which is elsewhere available for purchase. Both Maine and Vermont have passed legislation supporting academic detailing and New Hampshire has introduced an academic detailing bill (HB1513).

The Academic Detailing Planning Initiative is generously supported with grants from:

- The Endowment for Health
- The New Hampshire Medical Society
- Community Catalyst/The Prescription Project
- Maine Health Access Foundation
- The Bingham Program
- The Nathan Cummings Foundation

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*Prescription Policy Choices is a nonprofit public policy organization engaged in education and research on prescription drug issues.*

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\* This meeting was originally scheduled to take place on December 3, 2007 but was rescheduled due to inclement weather.