

# Drug Payouts: Pharma giant caught paying doctors



Drug giant Bristol-Myers Squibb (annual sales: \$17.9bn) is “proud of its commitment to conduct business with the highest standards of integrity in its mission to extend and enhance human life”, according to a spokesman.

Strange, then, that it has just been handed a whopping \$515m fine for mis-selling drugs, inducing doctors to prescribe drugs inappropriately, and setting fraudulent prices on some of its products.

The company has been caught making illegal payments to doctors as an inducement to get them to buy their drugs. Doctors also received ‘consulting fees’ to sit on supposed advisory boards and programmes, some of which involved necessary trips to luxury locations where, as part of the fact-gathering exercise, expensive wines and fine foods had to be consumed.

Meanwhile, the company was paying retail and wholesale pharmacies to buy its drugs. It was also encouraging doctors to prescribe its antipsychotic drug Abilify (aripiprazole) to children when it had been licensed for use only to adults.

Must be part of that mission to extend and enhance profits, sorry, human life.

(Source: British Medical Journal, 2007; 335: 742-3).