

more and more resemble marketing.”

Governments could also help, by passing regulations that would make it illegal for companies to be involved in both scientific research and marketing. This would be a radical move, altering the way drug companies work, but it is feasible, says Sergio Sismondo, a philosophy professor at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

“There isn’t a clean distinction between something that is purely PR and something that serves PR purposes and something that is a normal academic medical journal that can be used for PR,” says Sismondo. “There are no rules whatsoever about this. Anybody can publish a journal.”

Dr. Joseph Ross, an assistant professor with the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, has also written about medical ghostwriting (*JAMA* 2008;299[15]:1800-12). Ross says there is a need for clearer divisions in academic publishing between unbiased scientific content and information originated from drug advertisers. “It’s all intertwined and hard to

differentiate from the outside,” he says.

Prominent journals also have a role to play in cleaning up medical literature, says Dr. David Healy, a psychiatrist at the University of Cardiff in Wales, United Kingdom, and a critic of the drug industry’s influence on physicians’ drug prescribing habits. Healy says that many “kosher journals” have become very dependent on pharmaceutical advertising and supplements. Some doctors deride supplements as “throw-aways” and claim they have no influence, but Healy says there is a cumulative effect to flooding doctors’ offices with supplements: the benefits of new drugs become widely disseminated while the risks remain largely unknown.

“The fact that there are a bunch of symposium supplements that say drugs are good for X, Y and Z and don’t have hazards A, B and C, and that these can be readily produced, is good for the finances of journals but bad for medicine.” — Roger Collier, *CMAJ*

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Roger Collier

