

*Dear Pharmaceutical Representatives,*

*We're seeing a lot of new faces here lately. To maximize my time, minimize my frustration and demonstrate to my patients that drug companies do not influence my opinions, I have written down some helpful tips that I hope will guide our interactions and optimize our relationship.*

## **How to Sell Pills Without Becoming One: A Guide for Pharmaceutical Representatives**

**Do** tell me why you think your drug is exceptional. Use the STEPS approach, describing the Safety, Tolerability, Efficacy, Price and Simplicity of your drug.

**Don't** say negative things about your competitors or their drugs. Tell me why your product is superior, not just passable. Telling me that your drug is better than a bad drug is not exactly a glowing endorsement.

**Do** tell me why the cost of your drug is a better value than generics in its class. Compare the cost to your brand-name competitors only if there are no acceptable generics in your drug's class.

**Do** keep me updated on the formulary and tier status of your drugs. This is often more important than your cash price because a high-tiered drug may cost my patient six to 10 times the generic price or two to three times the price of a preferred brand-name drug.

**Do** show me patient education materials about diseases your drugs treat. But please omit drug names, logos, icons or mascots. Including the company name in small type is acceptable. My goal is to distribute information, not propaganda.

**Do** ask me to sign for samples. I use them to test your drugs on my patients before they buy them, or to help them deal with the expense of your drugs when they can't afford them.

**Don't** tell me how much another physician in the area uses your drug or how he or she uses it off-label.

**Do** arrange for other specialists to come to our office during lunch, and let me pick their brains.

**Don't** tell me that you use databases to profile my prescribing habits. I know it happens, but I am not comfortable becoming a demographic target in your marketing efforts.

**Don't** ask me what I prescribe or why I prescribe it. This makes me feel like you are collecting marketing information and trying to debate my prescription choices.

**Don't** bother inviting me to evening dinner presentations. I don't need extra reasons to spend time away from my family.

**Don't** expect me to stay long in the sample room. My schedule is very tight, and I don't like to keep patients waiting. I'll stay long enough to sign and leave.

**Don't** expect me to spend more than 15 minutes at lunch, if I join you at all. Eating the lunch you provide often saves me time, which means I can get back to taking care of my patients and get home to my family sooner.

**Do** feel free to talk about the weather, movies, current events or other small talk. Just realize that my time is limited and we will have a smaller window in which to discuss your drug.

**Don't** comment on how long it has been since you've had a chance to talk to me. I will try to give you some time in a busy day of seeing patients, but the guilt trip makes me want to give you even less of my time.

**Don't** give me anything to read later. I have more than enough to read already and am capable of doing my own research if interested.

**Don't** ask me to prescribe your drug or whether I will prescribe it. I make that decision on a case-by-case basis with my patients.

**Don't** offer me pens, notepads or any other "freebies." The cost of these items is included in your company's budget, which influences the price you charge my patients for your drugs. I'd rather you pass along savings than pens.

*My goal is to provide my patients with the best, most affordable health care possible. Your goal is to sell drugs. I hope by following the above guidelines we'll be able to leave our encounter feeling like our time together helped both of us to further our goals.*