

Rutland Herald

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Article published Aug 9, 2008

Drug companies can be helpful

Although Dr. Chen undoubtedly has the best interests of his patients in mind when practicing medicine in the emergency room, as an elected official his health policy prescriptions could be detrimental to Vermont patients' access to the best care. Specifically, I am referring to his views on what constitutes appropriate collaboration between physicians and the companies developing and introducing new and emerging therapies. ("Drug industry wields too much influence," July 24).

As physicians, it is our duty to be well-informed about the potential benefits and risks associated with new therapies. The truth is a patients' access to a promising new therapy is dependent on his or her physician's knowledge of the therapy's benefits and risks. While useful information is available to physicians from multiple sources, such as medical journals, continuing education courses and feedback from colleagues and peers, sometimes pharmaceutical company representatives are best able to convey critical information — including emerging safety developments.

Despite Dr. Chen's claims to the contrary, I find it difficult to believe that many physicians are unduly influenced by the educational materials provided by pharmaceutical companies.

In my practice, I rely upon my education, training, and information from multiple sources, including industry and government and then determine what course of treatment is in the best interest of my patient.

Yes, it is imperative that relationships between physicians and drug companies are professional and of the highest ethical nature, but we must not sacrifice education and access to medicines in favor of over-regulation. Our patients deserve better.

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