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Relating with monographic "Actualización terapéutica para el tratamiento de la diabetes tipo 2"[☆]

En relación con el monográfico «Actualización terapéutica para el tratamiento de la diabetes tipo 2»

Sir,

In mid-2012, the journal *Avances en Diabetología* published a special issue analyzing the potential advantages of insulin aspart in different clinical settings.¹ The undersigned did not consider its publication appropriate and thought it useful to express our opinion in a letter to the editor.² A little later, we had the unpleasant experience of finding the situation being repeated, in this case in a linagliptin monograph published in the journal *ENDOCRINOLOGÍA Y NUTRICIÓN*, the channel of communication of the Spanish Society of Endocrinology and Nutrition. Both papers were related to diabetes. Although we took good note of the explanation given by the editorial board of *Avances en Diabetología* in its reply to our protest letter,³ we think we have reason on our side again.

We therefore feel obliged to take up again the final paragraph of the abovementioned letter and repeat: "The use of the official channel of expression of a scientific society to publish the monograph of a product sponsored by the company manufacturing such a product is another question. The undersigned think that such publication—however it is justified—represents advertising. Mixing the activities of the scientific societies and the pharmaceutical companies is nothing new. It is the basis for the sponsorship of scientific meetings, and one of the reasons for their relative—but progressive—disrepute. It hurts, however, when the same systemic disease reaches the heart of a scientific society and its organ of expression because we might as well register it directly as a trading company".

After the publication of our first letter and the abovementioned reply to it, we find this painful repetition of the same story, so consolidating a very questionable habit and the undersigned again find themselves questioning the publication of a sponsored product monograph in the official organ of expression of a scientific society. We think that when a product is not analyzed in its context or with its competitors, we are coming close to propaganda, either

express or subliminal. And this is not the concept of the organ of expression of a scientific society that we wish to uphold and defend. Amongst other things, this is because it may lead to odd or spurious interpretations which we are all undoubtedly interested in avoiding. An additional reason is that, because of the social and health significance of the concerned issue, the leadership that scientific societies and their organs of expression should exercise must be beyond doubt or it will evaporate. We would not like our scientific society to end up as merely an additional link in the chain of consumption.

With specific regard to the linagliptin monograph, particular mention should be made of the approach proposed: because of the alarming prevalence of diabetes and the frequent coexistence of chronic renal failure, it is particularly appropriate to discuss the adequacy of hypoglycemic drugs in renal failure. This appears to be a planned stage in which—involuntarily, we hope—cardinal issues such as cost-effectiveness are minimized. Increased healthcare expense is too often attributed to demographic factors, ignoring the fact that the economic development of the region concerned and increased technological expense (in the widest sense of the term) are even more important factors.⁴ We would like to highlight as an example that in the first three trimesters of 2012, almost 12.5 million euros were spent on hypoglycemic drugs (excluding insulins) in Extremadura. Eighty percent of this amount was accounted for by different presentations of DPP-IV inhibitors or GLP-1 analogues, and it is a fact that costs in this field have increased by 200–300% in recent years. At a time when we see cuts being made daily in budget provisions, including expenses on staff and healthcare benefits, which sometimes make access to services difficult or impossible, we must ask ourselves if this increase under the heading of pharmaceutical expense is really supported by clinically relevant results. If, as we suspect, the answer is no, what other factors have influenced this change in prescription?

In this regard, we only want to clearly show that, as stated in the monograph's introduction, the current state of well-being is "evidently threatened". Our own scientific society recently gave its support to the manifesto "Debate on the risk of irreversible impairment to Spanish public health".⁵ We need to consider whether, along with some questionable political decision-making, inadequately based prescription might not be the accomplice of this process?

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Reply letter[☆]

Carta respuesta

Sir,

Like our colleagues on the editorial board of the journal *Avances en Diabetología*,¹ we also appreciate the interest shown by Relimpio et al. in the journal of the Spanish Society of Endocrinology and Nutrition (SEEN). The letter received from these authors, however, caused us considerable surprise, because *ENDOCRINOLOGÍA Y NUTRICIÓN* has been publishing monographs funded by pharmaceutical companies for many years. We do not know whether the authors of the letter ignored this fact until the monograph alluded to happen to be published² or whether they simply decided that it was this monograph specifically which merited the sending of the text, to which this is the response. It is also possible that their perceptions regarding this type of publication have recently changed and that until this monograph was published they had never experienced the unpleasant sensation they report in their letter. It is far from our intention to cause the readers of this journal to suffer adverse effects because of the contents of such supplements. While some of the terms used by the authors may be considered inappropriate, we are sure they did not have any intention of giving offence with their words. Having said this, we will try and introduce some elements of reflection regarding the contents of their letter.

First of all, the publication of monographs related to drugs is common practice in many national and international publications. Whether or not this is a good practice cannot be decided by the editorial board of the journal of a scientific society. It is the Spanish Society of Endocrinology and Nutrition, through its managing board, which periodically negotiates with the publishing company the contract including the possibility of publishing supplements of any type. In any case, the editorial board of the journal is

responsible for following the scientific editorial procedures required for this type of publication, the essence of which was described by Conget et al. in the reply they sent to a letter by the same authors.^{1,3} The editors are also responsible for ensuring transparency, so that any reader may identify any conflicts of interest.

The authors have apparently disregarded the advice by Conget et al. to discuss each of the questions they raise in the appropriate forum. The authors are again recommended to address each question to whom it may concern. To propose the removal of monographs sponsored by pharmaceutical companies published as supplements to the journal *ENDOCRINOLOGÍA Y NUTRICIÓN* they should have addressed their objections to the managing board of the SEEN and, ideally, they should also have expressed their opinion at the assembly of the Society, which is the most suitable place for this debate. It can be clearly inferred from the text that the authors are making this proposal in the setting of a wider proposal contemplating the renunciation of the Society of any direct sponsoring of any scientific society by the pharmaceutical companies.

Relimpio et al. insist in their manuscript on the aspects discussed in their previous publication,³ and again provide data concerning pharmaceutical costs in our country. We have nothing to add to these data, nor can we answer the questions of the authors regarding drug prescription. We think that such questions should not be posed to the editor of this journal. It is the governments that decide budget provisions, and how the expenses under the different headings are controlled. The signatories should rather address themselves, through the channels they deem most appropriate, to the authorities responsible for health planning and policy at autonomous and national level, and ultimately address the European Medicines Agency, which authorizes the clinical use of drugs. In fact, the authors could have extended their complaint, starting from the publication of the abovementioned supplement, and ultimately questioning the system governing the economy worldwide. In this context, they could question the convenience of drug research, production, and marketing being in the hands of private industry. They could even question the fact that a considerable number of scientific publications are controlled by multinational companies. These are substantive issues; all of them are

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