Media Release

UniSyd Paper On Gifts And The Dental Profession Misses The Mark

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For Immediate Release

An academic paper that seeks to foster debate on the relationship between the dental industry and dental profession, particularly insofar as the provision of gifts are concerned, has been welcomed cautiously by the Australian Dental Industry Association (ADIA), the peak business organisation representing dental product manufacturers and suppliers. Of concern is that the paper has not fully articulated the commitment of the dental industry to preserving the independence of decision making by healthcare professionals.

The paper entitled Looking Gift-horses in the Mouth: Gift-giving, Incentives and Conflict of Interest in the Dental Profession was authored by Dr. Alex Holden and Prof. Haiko Spallek from the School of Dentistry at the University of Sydney. The paper provided only passing reference to the ADIA Code of Practice that sets a framework on the interaction between the profession and the ADIA member businesses that supply more than ninety-five per cent of products supplied to dentists nation-wide.

“The key objective of the ADIA Code of Practice is that decisions on patient management and treatment options for health needs are based upon sound clinical evidence, not driven by incentives or other influences offered by industry. The paper reviews this aspect of the relationship between the industry and the profession but in doing so overlooks the strong and existing commitments of ADIA members,” said Troy Williams, ADIA Chief Executive Officer.

“The stated aim of the paper is to stimulate discussion around dentistry’s relationship with stakeholders including the medical devices sector; however, it does this from an incredibly one-dimensional perspective. The paper’s authors haven’t fully appreciated the full scope and shared commitment of the Australian Government and medical devices sector in providing clear guidelines on how the industry interacts with dentists and allied oral healthcare professionals,” Mr Williams continued.

Although welcoming the paper as an initiator of debate, ADIA has cautioned using it as the basis for forming considered opinions as it has failed to fully canvass the obligations that the dental industry has to the profession.

“The paper calls for the dental industry to consider the impact of gifts and incentives upon the clinician-patient relationship. The industry did this some years ago and responded positively with clear and unambiguous guidelines set out in the ADIA Code of Practice. It’s already the case that businesses in the dental industry can’t offer gifts to dentists in connection with the supply of therapeutic products,” Mr Williams concluded.

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