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From the Founder: A strategic collaboration with Pf...

My Rating: ★★★★★

Average Rating: ★★★ (28 ratings)

125 have answered

From the Founder: A strategic collaboration with Pfizer

For the past several months the Sermo community has discussed what if any role the pharmaceutical industry should have in Sermo. At first, physicians were wary of industry involvement. Then about nine months ago, I noticed that things started to change. At the time, this was a complete surprise to me, but the more I read the posts and the discussions within the community, the more it seemed to make sense. Doctors pointed out that Sermo was quickly becoming a powerful voice for physicians in the US. It would benefit all of us if pharmaceutical companies could hear opinions about "real world" patient reactions and responses to their products. Members of the community consistently pointed out that a proactive approach on Sermo's part would allow physicians affiliated with pharmaceutical companies to be clearly identifiable within the community:

<https://md.sermo.com/medical/ticket/details?nav=on&id=6417>

During this same time period, we saw some promising movement in the pharmaceutical industry, namely companies voicing their desire for new and different ways to connect with physicians. Mutual interest from both physicians and industry created a unique opportunity for Sermo, and we set out to facilitate an open and honest dialogue about what physicians really need from pharma to serve our patients.

While industry interest in Sermo has been universal, we have spent a long time evaluating how and with whom Sermo should launch this endeavor. If Sermo physicians were going to invest the time and effort in working with a company to redefine the relationship between physicians and industry, it would be critical to do so with a partner that possessed the greatest likelihood of setting a precedent across the broader medical industry. I am pleased to announce that Sermo has entered into a strategic collaboration with Pfizer. Pfizer was an obvious choice for several reasons. First, Pfizer has a long history of pioneering new models and mediums for interaction with physicians. Second, Pfizer has the scope and depth, both in terms of drug portfolio and organizational size, to impact the broader industry. Pfizer's goal is simple: open a series of dialogues with Sermo physicians to determine how the exchange of information and services should change to best improve patient care. It is our intent that this initial relationship will help set a precedent for collaboration that is mirrored by the rest of the pharmaceutical industry.

Where might opportunity lie for Pfizer?

- The opportunity to have physicians within their organization to work with physicians in Sermo to define new standards of collaboration in the Web 2.0 space.
- The opportunity to learn how physicians are using new technologies to access information when making decisions about patient care.
- The chance to build a mutually productive working relationship with physicians by providing a new level of value that wasn't possible before.

Q: What do you think the most beneficial aspect of the Sermo-Pfizer relationship could be?

Select your answer:

- 1. Direct input from physicians to Pfizer re: marketing concerns, medication efficacy, medication side-effects, etc.
- 2. Tincture of Time will tell
- 3. No free advice!
- 4. Not starting it in the first place!!!!
- 5. more money for the mds (and do's, too!!!!)
- 6. Funding to ensure the sustainability of Sermo
- 7. it's a slippery slope... the playing field really isn't level --- pharma has much bigger influence and more money than we do...
- 8. does it really matter what we say?
- 9. The opportunity to have physicians within their organization to work with physicians in Sermo to define new standards of collaboration in the Web 2.0 space.
- 10. unlimited Viagra for us and our fathers.
- 11. Please resist pressure to restrict doctor-pharma interactions. We cannot be seduced by a pizza, pen, or even modest honorarium. Medicine is already well down the "Road to Serfdom" and practicing doctors need all the support we can get.
- 12. I am disappointed by your sell-out.
- 13. large company such as Pfizer, along with other industry giants should spend time and dollars lobbying Congress for more reasonable rates for all physicians, especially primary care physicians, who write the majority of scripts in this country.
- 14. revise #10--shouldn't it be unlimited Viagra for us and our husbands
- 15. I'd like to add my own answer

Where might there be opportunity for Sermo physicians?

- This is an opportunity to sit down and discuss the challenges we face on a level playing field.

- This is an opportunity to have our collective voice heard.

Physicians now have a mechanism to represent our profession and our patients in discussion on these matters with industry.

- Together we can determine how we'd like to access information about medications, devices and treatments and what the most efficient mechanisms should be.

Sermo is a new medium and we have been working hard to create an entirely new way for this community to welcome outside information on its own terms, without disrupting current physician discourse on Sermo. This new technology is called HotSpots. I am confident that you will be as excited as I am when you see it.

Tomorrow, you'll see a post from Dr. Michael Berelowitz, Senior Vice President of Global Medicine and New York Site Head of Worldwide Development for Pfizer, which will outline Pfizer's approach and aspirations for this collaboration. I urge you to weigh in, contribute your thoughts and help to guide this process. Of course, all communication with the community that originates from Pfizer physicians will be clearly marked as such.

This is just the beginning. We have the opportunity to reinvigorate productive dialogue between physicians and industry that improves the medicines we use and ultimately the patient care we deliver. You will help define what happens next, and I am anxious to hear your feedback.

Tags

[from the founder](#) , [pfizer](#)

Category: [Sermo Specific](#)

 Posted on October 14, 2007 by [dpalestrant](#)

Posting ID: 11013

Comments (87)

[signaturedoc](#) Internal Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:38 PM

I guess I get to be first to comment-
Congrats to Sermo. This is a big deal. I hope Pfizer is sincere in their intent to listen.

So can we start complaining about how there are just too many Pfizer reps visiting the office? One person selling each drug is quite enough. Two is obnoxious; three reps selling the same drug makes me not want to prescribe the drug.

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:38 PM

[feeling ill]

I...I'll go and do it myself...thanks...I know where I can get some polonium..

[looking at my 600\$ monthly income and wondering how much polonium costs]

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:41 PM

I'll bet the senior vice prez of Pfizer makes more money than me...

I'll bet you a million bucks he makes about 10,000 times what I do. The Drug Lords.

[shivering]

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:46 PM

Satan himself hath come to Sermo.

[Looking for my Tardis - the last one. The very last one.]

[docnag1](#) Family Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:48 PM

I just hope we all don't get microchips in the back of our necks like the reps do!!

[docnag1](#) Family Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:49 PM

Maybe we could convince them to get rid of the "viva viagra" commercials!!

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:59 PM

There could be no greater affront to me personally. You've invited THE company that's destroyed my profession. Everyone sold out to them. The APA, the FP's, the brainwashed 'therapist' crowds and lay-masses: "I got a chemical imbalance in the brain".

Pfizer is EVIL. Pfizer has destroyed my career and and my life.

[Adawaal](#) Radiation Oncology

Oct 14, 2007 at 7:59 PM

So here's the way I see this. As with all paradigm shifts, the devil is in the details.

Had PhRMA been part of Sermo from the outset, Sermo would already be dead, a long-forgotten entity. It was important to be able to establish Sermo on our own terms, building a robust community with a strong sense of direction and priorities.

Logging on as a n00b back in the beginning and faced with the face of PhRMA influence, I would have turned right around and never looked back. As with most start-up communities, there is a "feeling-out" period among users, where they are a bit more timid and look to "strong influences" to gauge the situation as far as content and etiquette. PhRMA would have been far too strong a force at the outset, shaping the conversation and the entire Sermo experience.

Today, there is a nearly immutable community that enjoys a sense of what is "Sermo." We've had the AMA come in (and make some noise and then do nothing). Users stood up to protect what they saw as the essence of Sermo, as they should have. Nothing changed in the community due to this "invasion." Then the FDA came in, users reacted similarly. Even when confronted with actual threats to the community (David Behar, medgadget), the community spontaneously rose up as one to protect itself.

Somewhere along the way from start-up to where we are now, a group of disparate physicians formed something special. What emerged somewhat organically is what we know as Sermo today. It's now a force stronger than any one or group of individuals, far beyond what Daniel can really steer easily (sorry, Daniel, but it's true).

Now the spectre is raised of a pharmaceutical company joining

Now the spectre is raised of a pharmaceutical company joining our little family. Undoubtedly, there will be a clamoring louder than what we heard regarding the AMA and FDA put together, with a little dbehar thrown in. I have no doubt that for some of our users, this will indeed be the "last straw" and lead to some people leaving. Nothing wrong with that; we all have to make our own paths based on what each of us see Sermo as representing.

However, will the introduction of PhRMA really be a destructive influence on Sermo? I fail to see how that is possible. PhRMA is to many of us like that alcoholic uncle, the interminable fuck-up, who has to earn our trust after many years of screwing with us. I'm probably in this camp myself, to be honest. But I just don't see this move as a realistic "threat" to the community.

Again, the devil is in the details. If there is even a sniff of using this affiliate relationship for sneaky DTC ads, the outcry from the community will be like nothing seen before. No doubt about this in my mind at all. There are already MDs who work for PhRMA lurking, so bringing in this company will not in any way change the ability for "spying" on our words. The concerns about access to posts unrelated to this company are understandable from an emotional standpoint but irrelevant from a logical one because these docs already have full readable access.

How can this affiliate relationship be of benefit to the Sermo community? That's the only thing I care about. I can see several possibilities:

1) A real and direct manner of post-marketing surveillance of side effects. Patients can be alerted earlier, and there would be no way for this company to ever state they were unaware of (insert deadly adverse event here) of their drugs once they are posted here.

2) Discussions on how to better get needed medications to low-income patients. Currently, we have pharm companies doing their own thing without much of a clue to how best to structure samples and assistance programs to be most effective.

3) Dialogue on how to expand community physicians' participation in clinical trials. The barriers are real, and we may have ideas on how to address that. Additionally, many docs overestimate these barriers and may be able to learn how to participate. This can benefit patients as well as physician practices (\$\$\$).

4) PhRMA has one main goal - to sell as much of their drugs as possible. Third-party payers get in their way as much as our way. Perhaps at least on this front there is a possibility of an effective partnership.

I'm sure there are many others as well, but I'm getting carpal tunnel syndrome. Big picture? Yes, there will be an outcry. This is not altogether unjustified. However, this is not a real "threat" to our community, and there may actually be some benefit. The devil is in the details.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology
Tincture of Time will tell

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:03 PM

[docnag1](#) Family Medicine
Although this is not a threat to our community, as seeker

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:03 PM

suggests, it may very well pose a threat to the livelihood of some....like a vulture picking the bones clean.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:06 PM

HmmI see the web links do not work in the main post area even for Sermo. Maybe it will be fixed so do not have to do it in the first comment box if it is too long and makes answering the questions sometimes impossible.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:37 PM

Speaking about reps, what turns me off quickly is when the rep asks me a medical question about my field and the drug he is pushing - it is so obvious he is brown-nosing by seemingly to value my opinion probably along with everyone else's - oops, shouldn't have said that because may Pfizer will tell them to stop and I will have to find something else to use.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:37 PM

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[abhnsn24](#) Hematology/Oncology

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:46 PM

Good move, DP, and best choice for testing the water with this type of collaboration. I look forward to some meaningful exchange of ideas.

[Floridoc](#) Family Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:51 PM

Pfizer? Who's that?

Oh, yeah. That's the company that runs hot and cold. I had more Pfizer reps for a few years than I could shake a tongue blade at, coming in weekly with invitations to educational meetings on their products, then they just DISAPPEARED. Honestly, they just vanished.

Wait a few years, when they want you to prescribe something new and (supposedly)improved (and expensive) and THEY'RE BACK. (What spooky movie did that line come from?) Repeat cycle and they've disappeared again.

Do me a favor next time. Stay away. I don't want to know about your products, see your reps or get any 'educational meeting (infomercial) dinners.'

PS How much does Mikey, senior VP earn? I'll bet it's a multiple of our combined incomes.

[meghanjack](#) Emergency Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:52 PM

If Pfizer is soliciting opinions, will we get paid for this?

[abhnsn24](#) Hematology/Oncology

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:58 PM

seeker and sayaah - You will now have the opportunity to directly address your concerns to Pfizer, and other Sermoans will be able to chime in. With all the vocal Sermoans expressing their concerns, we have a better chance of making a difference. Stay in, stay active, get their attention, see what happens.

[steeldoc](#) Obstetrics

Oct 14, 2007 at 8:59 PM

Just don't trust them. Disingenuous is the first word that comes

to mind. Just how many Pfizer reps does one doctor need?

[abhsn24](#) Hematology/Oncology

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:09 PM

Guys, don't miss this opportunity. They are going to post, we can comment, and will be able to discuss all those issues that have gotten on your last nerve. Please read DP's post again. We are in a position to let our collective voice be heard now to where it can make a difference. Be a part of the experience. Collect your thoughts and have your issues ready for discussion. It may be a bumpy ride at first, but I believe we can and will make a difference here.

[steeldoc](#) Obstetrics

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:10 PM

OK Mr Pfizer, first only 1 rep, not 10. Make it a good one who will not get upset when I walk by with a pen in my hand to sign as I am walking by to my next patient. Second, bring plenty of samples, NOT vouchers. Third, quit asking me to dinner, I never go (because I would rather be home and you know it) and I get pissed when you keep asking. Third, when I say I don't do lunches, do not bring me breakfast in the office. I have already eaten, and everyone else in my office has a weight problem. Pretty good start, I'll think of more later, glad you care.

[mitchw111](#) Infectious Diseases

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:12 PM

An inevitable move considering the growing numbers on Sermo- I'm sure Pfizer is paying pretty well..... I see no benefit to the physicians who use this site to communicate with each other - this is yet another business move for Sermo.

Adawaal is right that if this was introduced a lot earlier, it would have turned a lot of people off-- but DP should not assume this is too late to occur just because the numbers are so high now. That survey that said a lot of us wouldn't mind pharm as clients is one thing- but the reality of having Pfizer on board is another... Because they multiply.....

There have also been increasing number of posts asking about making money on Sermo and reimbursements for physicians- This is the reality that doctors care about themselves first, and don't like to be taken advantage of. I have a hard time seeing how this move fits with this concept.....

[docnag1](#) Family Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:19 PM

I would vote for more humane treatment of reps....when it is 98 degrees outside, they should be allowed to take their jackets off. And they should not be watched by satellite....right to privacy.

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:29 PM

abhsn24 - don't be naive. These people have heard it all. They use all the info they gather to create better strategies to make more money. They have destroyed psychiatry.

While most FP's are innocents brainwashed - this VP here is no innocent. Pharma purposefully promote illnesses, distort and hide trial results while POURING money into psychiatry - ads, the APA, brainwashing at every level. It is no accident that psychotropics are the among the biggest sellers on earth.

Do you know where this has left me? Career over. No money. No f%%%%%%%% money.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:37 PM

Will Pfizer use our comments to correct problems or just as a way of finding new ways to do the same to convince us to prescribe their drugs.

We have to remember that they still are in business of making money by selling their drugs rather than someone else's

[steeldoc](#) Obstetrics

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:37 PM

Humane treatment of reps? Are you kidding me? Have you ever had a rep in your office after 2PM? Do you get a free car? Doesn't it piss you off that there are reps who make more than some FP's? Do you really think the rep gives shit about your family, kids, etc? Please!

[maggieruby40](#) Pain Medicine

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:50 PM

At least it is not Purdue!
Honestly not sure what I think other than that.
I do want to know from Pfizer why they did not put the fact that celebex can cause methemoglobinemia in the PI and still have not !

[sayaaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:52 PM

From the xconomy web site.

The concluding paragraphs (link for whole article follows)

(One concrete benefit of the partnership for Pfizer will be the right to post a certain number of "hotspots" within Sermo. The hotspots technology, which Sermo will launch next month, allows clients to introduce outside information into Sermo in a variety of well-marked forms, including guidelines, polls, and drug backgrounders.)

So, to recap, tomorrow morning a bunch of drug-industry representatives—members of a group that's probably tied with insurance bureaucrats for second-most appearances on doctors' lounge dart boards (surely lawyers top the list)—are going to slap on their virtual Pfizer badges and step inside a close-knit, incredibly self-protective community of doctors. I would love to be a fly on that wall but, though Sermo has previously granted journalists limited-time observer accounts, the company decided against it this time. Still, I'm thinking this is an experiment that potentially affects all of us, in that it's an opportunity, in some small way, for better or worse, to change the complicated relationship between money and medical knowledge.

www.xconomy.com

[resection](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:52 PM

I think Adawaal has really hit the thoughtful nail on the head. Well said.

[resection](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 14, 2007 at 9:54 PM

And here's the thing. For this to work, Pfizer has to respond to our posts, not just theirs. In other words, if we bring up issues, Pfizer needs to make a new post (since they cannot comment) and address it. If they just pose their own questions and want our opinions, it will be a far less effective collaboration.

[kaleido](#) Pediatrics

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:03 PM

Seeker on the plus side they have given you more time for sermo. I would rather have open conversatons about a drug

among doctors where multiple docs from multiple fields give input rather than a one on one with a drug rep. anyway. I suspect much of the point of Pfizers involvement with be to directly and indirectly encourage off label usage of products. Reps are stuck encouraging approved usage and dosages of products. Doctors can encourage unapproved and untested usage of products thus greatly expanding the marketability of drugs. Of course when we do the untested usage we take all the risks and the drug company gets to claim they are innocent.

[Sp1ndocto](#) Hematology/Oncology

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:07 PM

Good for DP, Good for Pfizer, Neutral for us - we still get to enjoy Sermo, and we already knew people were reading over our shoulders but why am I feeling even more like a rat running around in a maze for \$20, errr, I mean some cheese. I just don't like it.

Drug companies pay lots of money to figure out how to market to us. Now, all they have to do is read the more cynical threads for a road map as to how / why we don't trust them & Presto - change-o, their marketing changes.

I hope I am wrong and this is not just an opportunity for them to learn better how we think and precisely what we don't trust about them, so they can cover it up; I hope it is so they can figure out how to create better me-too drugs, um, I mean how they can better promote health care while still making an honest buck.

Agree with Adawaal - the devil is in the details.
Reading our comm

[Adawaal](#) Radiation Oncology

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:18 PM

Interesting bit from the Xconomy piece linked to above:

"There will be some ground rules, Palestrant says: of Pfizer employees, only those who are doctors can log in, they can only do so from their work computers, and they will be identified within Sermo as Pfizer employees, even if they had pre-existing accounts."

So any Pfizer docs already Sermo members who log in from work will be revealed as Pfizer employees.... Might be fun....

Another point that I've already discussed with the Sermo team -
- If Sermo truly wants a "conversation" (the namesake of our site) between the community and any of the affiliate partners (Pfizer, the AMA, the FDA, other Clients), they need to be able to respond by commenting **ON THEIR OWN POSTS ONLY**. Otherwise, it's just an eerily silent game of affiliates posing questions, us answering, and no dialogue actually occurring.

[B1Fixer](#) Orthopaedics

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:27 PM

will Pfizer docs comment?
will they vote?
will they create new answers to questions?
if so:
Will they be clearly identified as pfizer docs each and every time they do these things?

[msidmd](#) Infectious Diseases

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:34 PM

I noticed the same thing (with the same evil glee - my inference of evil dee. anyway) as Adawaal - and I hope 'tis true that

Sermodocs who are Pfizer employees will now be "tagged" on every post and comment - Sermogods?

As for the new PhRMA presence on Sermo, I will reserve judgement. I had thought it inevitable anyway, and agree that only time will tell regarding just how this will "play out". I'm not entirely happy about it, but I'm not entirely unhappy, either.

I do hope that this new "alliance" is truly closely monitored and adjusted PRN - I am NOT a fan of PhRMA (especially since I think the way they market antimicrobials is reprehensible...up to and including the way they distribute antibiotic samples!...not that I am biased or anything) and I am especially not thrilled at the idea that they will now have one more way to "get at" physicians via Sermo. But I will definitely be sticking around to see what happens.

[Sp1ndocto](#) Hematology/Oncology Oct 14, 2007 at 10:38 PM

agree w/ Adawaal again --- I like the idea of AMA, pfizer, etc being able to comment. At least on their own posts. Wouldn't necessarily mind them commenting on other posts, but I can see how it might become a nuisance. They shouldn't vote, obviously, but that would have no impact on me, anyway ...

[abc1530](#) Gynecology Oct 14, 2007 at 10:42 PM

I am sorry, the pharma guys can listen to me all they want, but I DO NOT want to hear from them. Absolutely not. With or without fancy buzzwords like "Web 2.0, dynamic progress into the future, forging new relationships etclabla" They influence me enough, thank you very much. I do not see reps in my office, I rip out the ads from magazines before I read them, since it eliminates distraction (yes, i am a bit radical). I am so happy to have a big huge doctors lounge where I can read and post, I am so thrilled! I cannot tell you how important this has become for me within a short time. Did my wife call you and tell you to post this so that I would get off the computer?? Any influence from Pfizer has to be absolutely marked and labeled loud and clear! I am sick and tired of industry people smeaking in their subtle, hard to detect influences into everything and every media corner money can buy. Please!

The only way would be to restrict the pharma guys to a category called "pharma" or something similar and they would absolutely not be allowed to post anywhere else - under penalty of immediate hard drive formatting!

You can sell my vote, my posts, my black leather jacket, but don't step on my blue suede shoes! Don't take away the Sermo I know and love!

[RhemaSayers](#) Family Medicine Oct 14, 2007 at 10:43 PM

The salient comments above have already covered what needs to be said. I hope this works out well for all of us.

[abc1530](#) Gynecology Oct 14, 2007 at 10:45 PM

Seeker, don't do it, we need you to help us grieve about our loss - maybe on the new Sermo2 that we will have to open somewhere else after Pharma comes in here! We need you for counseling! Stay with us!

[abc1530](#) Gynecology Oct 14, 2007 at 10:48 PM

Adawaal' s post is good, I would agree to that. But I don't want to see posts such as "why don't you try that medication in this case, I had good experiences with it, adn BTW here is a link about how wonderful it is" and the med happens to be from

about how wonderful it is and the idea happens to be from Pfizer. No Pfizer docs acting like reps in here!

[abc1530](#) Gynecology

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:53 PM

Sermo not on steroids, but on Viagra!
Are they going to announce the new liquid viagra when they come - with the slogan "pour yourself a stiff one?"

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:54 PM

abc1530, I had already opened a physician only discussion board, safe from pharma, close to a year ago. I also already closed it, since no one came.

[Datkpsych](#) Psychiatry

Oct 14, 2007 at 10:59 PM

Pfizer reps are afraid to see me because I see too many kids. They fear that they will be accused of marketing Geodon to children. Pharma is so PC. I'll see what pans out with this deal.

[abc1530](#) Gynecology

Oct 15, 2007 at 12:28 AM

seeker, are you serious? What was the name of the board?

[dmmd1](#) Gastroenterology

Oct 15, 2007 at 12:31 AM

Sermo definitely needs to identify pharma docs by company, and they should be expected to respond within their own posts, especially when posed questions by the rest of us Sermo docs. If they don't respond, then all we'll have are pharma surveys and not a dialogue at all.

[zbohart](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 1:00 AM

Let's be honest. In the US, it is private industry, and not government, that brings about change. Why should any sector of the private industry be alienated from us, as long as it leads to greater physician input? Much of the reason MDs are in the hole we're in is because we haven't gotten involved with industry, government, the legal profession, etc. Now here comes along Sermo, which is trying to change this, by giving us a louder voice. I say bravo.

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 1:15 AM

And they did it all on their own...

www.sfgate.com

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 1:18 AM

This is BIG PHARMA. This is MEGA CORPORATION INC.

Big Pharma and govt. sleep together. Big pharma and the FDA are a revolving door. Pfizer probably has as much influence on the world as we know it as any single corporation, and more than most governments.

[traumadoc](#) Surgery

Oct 15, 2007 at 3:34 AM

I've mixed feelings. I have never been a fan of any group with an agenda moving into our living room. But however, this whole thing is probably only making the activities of pharma being more transparent. I am sure through the mole docs, every pharma is currently and have been, throughout the existence of Sermo, been here watching & interacting, but without an identifiable face. Therefore things probably would not change much. In one sense the community, will at least now, who is saying what and therefore may be easier to understand the motives. On the otherhand, if the community ultimately gains from an open interaction and better understanding. it will be

certainly a positive thing. So personally , at this point I will just watch how things turn out. I am hopeful that this will also turn out to be a non event, just like the involvement of AMA & FDA, since I think that someone who has been here all the way is just announcing their name & introducing themselves (& not someone new walking in). Sermo community , judging from past experiences, I am sure, knows very well to handle indiscretions on the part of anyone or any group.

[docnag1](#) Family Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 7:25 AM

Gosh...steeldoc, I was making a joke.

[retiredpath](#) Pathology

Oct 15, 2007 at 8:33 AM

I am disappointed at Daniel's naivete. (and despite the fact that word didn't pass my computer's spell check, my heirloom 1959 unabridged dictionary says it is spelled correctly!) There is no way Pfizer is interested in anything but marketing in this "partnership". I think we, the membership, really need to think carefully about allowing more intrusions of this sort. Even though the AMA and FDA "didn't do anything", all three are doing something very important to them - COLLECTING INFORMATION on us.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 15, 2007 at 8:41 AM

"I think we, the membership, really need to think carefully about allowing more intrusions of this sort. " retiredpath -

First we get this for free. Dr P has been upfront with us about all of this. This site does not belong to us and our choices are to make our opinions known and then decide whether to stay or leave. It is to Dr P's advantage to have more doctors stay, but this has to be profitable for him unless we expect him to do it for good will.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 15, 2007 at 8:45 AM

The only way to prevent these "intrusions" would be to have us members pay dues to cover the costs and reasonable profits - is anyone willing to do that and if so, how much.

Hopefully this Sermo model will work, but that is not a sure thing.

[barbados](#) Internal Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 9:17 AM

I feel dirty. And not in a good way...

[maggieruby40](#) Pain Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 9:22 AM

I am very concerned about how this will impact us. I am unclear on why this would be necessary. I thought we were going to organize and move towards becoming a strong physician voice and changing our destiny. I think any close relationship with pharma will taint what will appear to be our motives in the political arena. I am saddened that we are not working on more important things like.

1. Changing the way we get paid.
2. Changing the public perception of us (this will not help)
3. Organizing a physician voice free of non physician influences as opposed to the AMA.

I fear we are going down the same road that the AMA and other physicians groups have gone....allowing big money to taint what our true objectives should be for physicians and their patients. Our only alliance should be patients !

[resection](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 15, 2007 at 9:23 AM

Adwawaal is right. They need to be able to comment, but on their posts only. Not on random ones.

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 9:25 AM

abc, of course I'm serious.

And btw it was completely at my own expense, mainly of time and effort, some small amount of cash. I've said a million times that it costs little to set up a discussion board - but it's another one of those zombie experiences like on the left side of the challenges - it's like no one can hear!

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:04 AM

maggieruby40 - what you say is true, but how would you finance this? Even non-profits need money to function.

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:19 AM

LOL.

I'm invisible!!!

[BRDOMPH](#) Family Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:28 AM

This is really a hot topic. I do feel that Pfizer could benefit from Sermo if they LISTEN. They are good at selling this is what they do. I just am not so sure they are ready to LISTEN.

- Drug companies as a whole design studies that are just Bad Science. They make design errors I would chide a medical student for.

-1. No control groups

-2. Extrapolating results to future that get silly.

- If they would learn from us and design new drugs and technologies the relationship would be constructive. If not it is just another marketing ploy. They would have to open themselves to our scientist side and be willing to answer honest questions.

[drcmor](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:30 AM

I think we have known this was inevitable, but I am disappointed. Very disappointed.

[sayaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:45 AM

Does anyone feel we are entitled for Sermo to remain just as we want it at no cost to us?

I would like it to remain but realize it is a business and am worried this will stifle much of the conversation and repartee and result in a much less enjoyable and less used Sermo which will cut into the profits of the business of Sermo which will effect what Sermo does and may become, if it survives.

If it becomes a money maker even for us, will that in itself not change Sermo?

[maggieruby40](#) Pain Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:58 AM

Sayaah, I am not sure. Maybe money from us. We pay money to all the other physician organizations. I am very disheartened right now.

[maggieruby40](#) Pain Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 10:59 AM

I guess this is the "fork" in the road for the owners of Sermo. There is no turning back now for them.

[savaah](#) Otolaryngology

Oct 15, 2007 at 11:09 AM

maggieruby40 - the problem is getting doctors to pay. Of all the 30,000 + members, only a small percentage comment and vote and how many who just lurk or use it occasionally would be willing to pay.

[sayaaah](#) Otolaryngology Oct 15, 2007 at 11:12 AM

Maybe the win-win-win situation will be that we get paid a fair amount for our opinions which are used to improve things AND so the pharms become more profitable which is there goal AND Sermo makes more profits and grows which is their goal.

[sayaaah](#) Otolaryngology Oct 15, 2007 at 11:12 AM

Old joke - when you come to a fork in the road, take it.

[unschedule88](#) Emergency Medicine Oct 15, 2007 at 11:52 AM

I'll add this to my list at www.declineandfallofwesterncivilization.com

[traumadoc](#) Surgery Oct 15, 2007 at 12:10 PM

To add to what sayah said, just look at the number of posts & comments so far ,about not getting money FROM Sermo- so how many would give TO Sermo.

[Andrea33333](#) Psychiatry Oct 15, 2007 at 12:29 PM

time will tell if this benefits us on Sermo

[sayaaah](#) Otolaryngology Oct 15, 2007 at 12:34 PM

Old Chinese curse - may you live in interesting times and this is getting interesting

[cmhughesmd](#) Critical Care Oct 15, 2007 at 1:36 PM

www.nofreelunch.org

Cheers,

[DocAKS](#) Emergency Medicine Oct 15, 2007 at 1:53 PM

How much is Pfizer paying you for this, Dan?

And I just don't believe that pharma wasn't involved with Sermo from the start: given that you keep your "client list" private and confidential while selling our postings to them, I reckon you've made hundreds of thousands from them already.

Try being a little more honest about this--don't play dumb with us.

[srasaki](#) Family Medicine Oct 15, 2007 at 2:11 PM

DocAKS,
I agree with you 100%, let no one fool us!!!!!!

[fbrizuela](#) Neurology Oct 15, 2007 at 2:12 PM

Don't be such God Damn babies. The fact is that I have rarely had a productive response in any of my postings. Seems like alot of you use this more a a sounding board for bashing others than for any meaningful scientific responses. I posted a question on parainfectious viral syndromes, and nobody appeared to know what I was talking about. I see more humor than I do carefully thought out responses.

Funny how I always see the same names with the same obnoxious comments. Perhaps this may be a good thing. Maybe it's time to take out the trash and make Sermo a site

were docs can communicate in a more professional manner. I like humor as much as the next guy, but seeing some idiot make a comment like "I think I'm going to vomit" when a posting on fibromyalgia is made shows the lack of dignity and character some have. I don't give a shit about how much money the CEO or whomever of Pfizer makes. Don't blame the money he makes on him. Hey, how many of you have gotten checks for a couple of hundred dollars just from commenting on a question. What do you think the public would think if they knew we made money like we do on this site? Hey, you want change, lobby your politicians. Bush didn't do crap.

[periwinkle](#) Emergency Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:16 PM

Did Berelowitz write that statement for you?

[seeker](#) Psychiatry

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:19 PM

>>Maybe it's time to take out the trash<<

Name names. Don't be shy.

[johnbcarson](#) Emergency Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:25 PM

Hello Pfizer. Bye-Bye Sermo. You sold out. Too bad. I'm closing my account. It took Pfizer to get me to log in to quit.

[asierra](#) Pediatrics

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:42 PM

Dime con quien andas y te dire quien eres (Tell me who do you hang on with and i will tell you who you are...) Old Spanish proberb. Nice being with you up to this time

[Sp1ndoctoer](#) Hematology/Oncology

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:42 PM

fbrizuela - take a look at some of the oncology discussions - there have been several good ones.

Also, many of the case presentations, while often zebras, have been quite well done ... you are missing out

[darr65](#) Gynecology

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:55 PM

No. No. No. No. The purpose of Sermo is physician communication, not providing information for any company's marketing.

AMA? - okay, it's a physicians organization.

FDA? - may not be perfect, but tries to operate in a manner to evaluate drugs and protect US population.

Pfizer? - oh, come on now.

There is a basic distance that needs to be maintained between physicians and for-profit companies. We are the protectors of our patients. We learn about and evaluate therapies and use them in our patients best interest. At least that's the ideal.

We are assaulted by clandestine mechanisms that tract our prescribing habits, that check whether we have met HEDIS standards, that pay us a cut rate, and the constant threat of malpractice. Sermo was a refuge from that. A place to talk just as doctors, all (or some of the) warts showing.

Daniel, you let the enemy in. Shame on you.

[nsalman](#) Critical Care

Oct 15, 2007 at 2:57 PM

The key word in this changing pardigm of healthcare is colloboration. We cannot assume everyone to be our enemy and refuse to engage and discuss any issues if it benefits us. The reality of today's enviroment however is that it may benefit phizer more than us because the drug companies like insurance companies control and contibute to increasing cost of healthcare but can come up with creative marketing ploys to

make the public believe they are fixing the mess we created. Our only saving grace is to forge alliances between each other and creating forums like this one and come up with ideas to form strategic alliances with all the players in healthcare including insurance companies. At present all other stakeholder, players in healthcare are benefitting except us but the public expects us to be their adovace while being fooled by the other players marketing ploys everyday. May be we can create a win-win situation with this alliance that benefits us and our patients. My two cents

[darr65](#) Gynecology Oct 15, 2007 at 2:58 PM

Daniel, clearly no business operates without capital. Sermo is no exception. What is Pfizer paying you? I think we'd all like to hear the answer.

[shrinkguy](#) Psychiatry Oct 15, 2007 at 3:05 PM

No good can come of this.

[ishanb](#) Gastroenterology Oct 15, 2007 at 3:08 PM

I realize Sermo is a business, and without financial support, it cannot survive. If Pfizer genuinely wants input into physicians' concerns about their products, marketing techniques and new drug development, and uses this site for that purpose, I see nothing wrong with that. Having said that, I don't as yet know how this collaboration is structured, including identifying drug company MDs, financial incentives, whether the site will become in large part a resource for Pfizer to conduct paid marketing/drug development surveys, etc. I also worry about the confidentiality of what I write here. Will Pfizer use anonymized quotes from Sermo in any way? Will they be able to address us individually, or all members of a single specialty? Will Sermo's affiliation with Pfizer allow more targeted email or even snailmail marketing of Pfizer products and services?

It would be very helpful, at least for me if we knew what is-and is not-allowed under the terms of the Pfizer/Sermo collaboration. Drug companies are businesses also, and I am sure they conducted a ROI analysis before proceeding with this association. After seeing firsthand what sometimes happens in clinical trials (which are supposedly carefully monitored by the FDA, SAHCRP and local/national IRBs), I wonder if business ethics is not an oxymoron at times in the pharmaceutical industry.

I hope the agreement between Sermo and Pfizer is not open to interpretation. Having received employment contracts from pharmaceutical companies, I have a few reservations. We have to trust Dr. Palestrant in this instance, but if the actual agreement is covered by an NDA, none of us will know the details; and, as others have already said, "the devil is in the details."

I will see what happens during the next six to twelve months. If Sermo's essential attraction-a forum for open, (usually) informed conversation between physicians-begins to diminish, I am not sure what I will do. Sermo, realistically, has no competition to speak of. All I can do is hope that Dr. Palestrant's judgment is sound and that he has wise counsel.

[msidmd](#) Infectious Diseases Oct 15, 2007 at 3:08 PM

darr65: I don't know what Pfizer gave Sermo for the privileges it

now apparently has, and I honestly don't care.

Read the FAQs and multiple media discussions (search "Sermo" and/or "Daniel Palestrant" for pages and pages of articles) - this site has always been a business venture, and was getting cash infusions from multiple sources since before the actual "launch".

My concern (regarding PhRMA-as-Client) is for the integrity and continued well-being of the community I have come to rely on for education, shared venting, brainstorming and fun. I'm not necessarily sure that this will continue as previous, and I am sure that there will be some awkwardness and "fall out", but I'm willing to wait and see what happens before I think about leaving.

[raustin](#) Family Medicine

Oct 15, 2007 at 3:42 PM

I really feel uncomfortable about any pharmaceutical company being able to access any portion of what was marketed to me as a physicians only forum. Will Pfizer be able to access information we put in before the time they bought us out? Did anyone ask our consent for this? I'm sure there was something suitably vague in the sign-up about how "terms may change," but this is not a physicians-only forum any more, if the drug reps are sitting at the table with us in the doctors lounge. I have not decided to leave, but I am not certain how much more I want to post.

[ncpeds](#) Pediatrics

Oct 15, 2007 at 3:52 PM

"drug reps are sitting at the table with us in the doctors lounge."
I think that's probably the point of all of this... well said!