Pfizer Is Hosting Patient Advocates At Posh Seminar

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spend money this way, he says, when many people have trouble paying for medications. Drug manufacturers court patients' advocates to gain "political protection" against efforts to lower drug prices, Dr. Sager says.

"Given that it costs on average only about 5 cents to manufacture a pill that's already on the market and retail for $1, he says, Pfizer could have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of medicine to help patients for what the seminar at Equinox will cost.

"Pfizer, with $13.5 billion in revenue last year and profit of $3.4 billion, has a stable of blockbuster drugs for a wide variety of diseases, including the anti-depressant Zoloft, the blood-pressure drug Norvasc, the antibiotic Zithromax, the impotence fighter Viagra and the angina drug Procardia.

"Educate Our Population"

The seminar begins tonight with a buffet supper. Thursday morning, there will be a talk by State Sen. Cathy Cook of Connecticut and a workshop called "Responding to the Media."

Friday morning, there will be a legislative "computer simulation exercise" and talks by a former Michigan Senate majority leader and the chairman of Pennsylvania's Senate Health and Welfare Committee.

The Guest List

Pfizer declined to identify the groups that have indicated they plan to attend the conference. However, one of those who is attending offered the list:

- Pennsylvania Forum for Primary Health Care
- Massachusetts Lung Association
- Community Health Charities of Massachusetts
- American Heart Association of Connecticut
- Virginia Quality Health Care
- Mental Health Association of New York
- Arthritis Foundation (Mass., N.Y. and eastern Pa. chapters)
- Epilepsy Foundation
- National Alliance for Mentally Ill in Massachusetts
- National Kidney Foundation of Mass., R.I. and N.H.
- Mental Health Board of Connecticut (southwest region)
- American Diabetes Association (Pa. and N.J. chapters)
- Mental Health Association of Maryland
- Leukemia Society of America in Connecticut
- Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Associations of New York City
- Alzheimer's Association of Connecticut
- Virginia Quality Health Care Network