

OMeGA mission

OMeGA Medical Grants Association is committed to supporting orthopaedic graduate medical education and advancing the orthopaedic profession by reducing conflicts of interest and promoting transparency. This was true when OMeGA was established in 2008 and continues to be a guiding principle in 2019.

The OMeGA Board is held to high standards

The OMeGA Board annually pledges to:

- have no “financial interest” in any orthopaedic medical device, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. “Financial Interest” shall mean ownership or personal compensation arrangements such as employment, consulting, speaking, or development relationships. Ownership of less than 5% in publicly traded securities and mutual funds in orthopaedic medical device, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies will not be considered a Financial Interest.
- not participate in developmental/financial negotiations with medical industry for education or research funding on behalf of the orthopaedic department of an institution. OMeGA board members are the ultimate determining body for orthopaedic program grants and participation in these negotiations could raise conflicts of interest.
- disclose any other financial or other personal considerations that may compromise, or may have the appearance of compromising, their ability to serve as an objective evaluator of graduate medical education programs.

The same standards apply to the Review Committee; however, they may hold leadership roles within their institution. These roles must be disclosed, and they too must recuse themselves from consideration of grant applications made by institutions with which they have been associated, currently and in the last two years.

Due diligence

Given OMeGA’s focus on being conflict-free and unbiased, we annually review the CMS Open Payment site for payments to our Board and Review Committee members. Although we understand that reports of payments are not necessarily indications of improper relationships, Open Payments Reporting is intended to create a more transparent environment while disclosing information about health care providers to the public. From the CMS website (<https://www.cms.gov/OpenPayments/About/Open-Payments-Data-in-Context.html>): “Transparency will shed light on the nature and extent of these financial relationships and will hopefully discourage the development of inappropriate relationships.”

For the 2018 year

Board item investigation

- There is an \$11.35 Food and Beverage entry from Wright Medical for Dr Julie Y. Bishop; however, she does not believe this is correct and is disputing this payment.

Review Committee investigation

- Dr Robert J. Bielski received a payment in the Food and Beverage category from Stryker in the amount of \$16.38.
- Dr Syed Ashfaq Hasan received a total of \$65.90 in three separate Food and Beverage payments from Encore Medical, LP, and \$415.86 in Travel and Lodging from Wright Medical. Dr Hasan mentioned that he does not recognize these entries and has not traveled with any company and is disputing all four entries.
- Dr William T. Obremskey received \$1,648 for Honoraria and \$1,640 for Travel and Lodging from Synthes GmbH. Dr Obremskey is a member of the AO anti-infection technical committee that meets twice a year. The AO organization is indirectly supported by an endowment from DePuy Synthes which indirectly covers travel and expenses for AO functions.

- Dr Ruth L. Thomas received two payments in the Food and Beverage category, \$47.18 from Exactech and \$107.44 from Wright Medical.
- Dr Brian Toolan received \$259 for a cadaver used in a motor skills lab from Midwest Associates. He also received \$16.38 in the Food and Beverage category from the Stryker Corporation.

Food & beverage

It has been a new process to remember to ask whether an event is industry funded and learn how to avoid reportable items: there has been a noticeable reduction in reported items since the CMS Open Payment site opened. The Board and the Review Committee have been asked to continue to be vigilant of even minor items, as they are all tracked and reported on the CMS site.

Clarity for OMeGA grant recipients

OMeGA reports the portion of support for each grant to the applicable manufacturers in accordance with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Open Payments reporting guidelines, providing the amount, institution name, and program director name. For clarity, we have asked companies to add the following note to their entries: “Grant made to OMeGA Medical Grants Association, an independent third-party organization which provides a transfer of value to a Covered Recipient free from donor influence.”

Email info@omegamedicalgrants.org with any questions

Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or for clarification.

8/21/19