

# PHARMALOT

## [Pfizer Fine Pays For CME Documentary](#)

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That's right. A small portion of the \$430 million settlement the drugmaker paid for illegal marketing of Neurontin was awarded as a grant to Boston's [MGH Institute for Health Professions](#), which turned around and hired Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau - the sales rep-turned-filmmaker - to produce a flick about CME for docs and nurse practitioners. For those who don't know or remember, she made '[Side Effects](#)' and '[Money Talks](#),' two flicks that poked pharma over its marketing practices.

The new 100-minute film, called PERx, is designed to enlighten health care providers about the influence that pharma marketing can have over prescribing habits, and to explore the ethics involved in the behind-the-scenes interactions between prescribers and industry reps. Initially, it will be available only on the Internet. Among those interviewed are Harvard's Jerry Avorn; Gene Carbona of The Medical Letter; Public Citizen's Sid Wolfe; Joel Lexchin of the WHO, and Ken Kaitin of Tufts, among many others. All thanks to Pfizer money.

### **Pharmalot chatted with Slattery-Moschkau....**

**Pharmalot:** Why do you think MGH asked you to make a film instead of, say, Michael Moore?

**KSM:** Well, I had already made two other films about the topic, one is a documentary, and so I have a track record. And having been on the inside, I had a point of view that there was information people needed to know. I'm not interested in bashing anyone, but there are a lot of issues to explore. CME is often a dry topic, but there are problems that need to be addressed.

**Pharmalot:** Why is CME such an issue that a film should be made about it? Even an educational one?

**KSM:** The figures are all over the map, but when you have 50 percent or more of the CME programs funded by industry you have a conflict of interest. I can tell you that as a rep, we had CME material to hand out to physicians and it was a goal to get them to read it. And if they took CME credits funded by the company, it sets the stage for them to prescribe your drug. The individual companies have a vested interest in swaying the physician. I really feel it's just common sense.

**Pharmalot:** What makes you think doctors don't know this?

**KSM:** I think on some level they do know this, but don't stop to think about it. Industry makes it very easy - the CME credits are free, there are meals and these are held in nice locations.

**Pharmalot:** So what is PERx supposed to do?

**KSM:** They will hopefully think about making better choices about which CME credits to pursue. They have choices. CME programs not funded by industry are out there. They can ask themselves: 'Who's funding what? Will I really get objective information?' They really need to get information from independent sources.

**Pharmalot:** You were a rep how long ago and for who?

**KSM:** I started with a tiny company that was later bought out. I was recruited by Bristol-Myers Squibb and worked there, and then was recruited by Johnson & Johnson, where I worked until 2002.

**Pharmalot:** That was five years ago. Do you think everything has remained the same?

**KSM:** I know there are self-regulating guidelines, but I still have a lot of friends in the industry. And I still talk to physicians, for my work now. Before you could take a doctor to dinner, and now you can't do that. But you can actually have that meal if it's labeled as something educational. That was a good pr move, but from what I understand, it's still business as usual.