

# Web MD's Ties with Monsanto and Big Pharma

When we look for medical information, whether or not we embrace alternative medicine, there are a few primary sources we tend to check out for the conventional treatment and the low down on any given illness. WebMD is at, or near, the top of that list, and it is clearly one of the most popular sites on the Internet.

We expect the information given on this WebMD to be clear, correct (within the limits of conventional medicine), and unbiased. Anyone with any knowledge about the way things really work will expect Big Pharma to have undue influence over the information presented because they have undue influence over doctors and every aspect of conventional medical treatment. We don't expect to find Monsanto and the FDA also hiding behind the curtain.

But first, more about Big Pharma. In 2010, Dr. Mercola wrote about a self-test for depression that was presented on WebMD by Eli Lilly. The problem was, even if you marked no to every indicator, the test came up with the same result – “You may be at risk for major depression.” The test was completely bogus, unethical, and irresponsible. WebMD presents itself as the unbiased 3<sup>rd</sup> party, but it isn't.

When an article is written by a sponsor, such as Monsanto, it is labeled as such. It says, “This content is from our sponsor. The sponsor has sole editorial control.” Does the typical reader realize they are reading an article that is clearly company propaganda and not content that WebMD necessarily supports? What site that was created to give its readers information publishes content they do not agree with? We don't!

In addition, the site is used and abused by companies like Monsanto as shown by series of emails exchanged between Monsanto and Dr. Kevin Folta of the University of Florida. Monsanto approached Folta, asking him to publish their biotech propaganda as if it were his own on WebMD. Of course, he agreed – Monsanto gives his programs money.

The final surprise is the relationship between WebMD and the FDA. According to Dr. Mercola, the FDA's first public-private partnership was with WebMD. The FDA states on their website:

- **FDA's Public-Private Partnerships** allow the FDA to partner with any number of a wide range of other organizations including, but not limited to, patient advocacy groups, professional societies, charitable foundations, industry members, trade organizations, academic institutions and other government and state entities.
- **FDA's Public-Private Partnerships** are science-driven, aim to improve the public health, and are structured to uphold the principles of transparency, fairness, inclusiveness, scientific rigor, and compliance with Federal laws and FDA policy.

The FDA does not, however, offer a list of their partners. But that's a bit creepy, isn't it? That a government agency created to provide oversight actually partners with private industry? Who's watching who?

It's always a good idea to follow the money connected to any source. WebMD makes lots and lots of money. Averaging 210 million unique users a month with 4.25 billion page views, WebMD reported a profit of \$10 million from a revenue of \$143.3 million for the first quarter of 2015. So if you choose to use the site in the future, keep these facts in mind, especially if you are seeking information on any controversial subject in which the pharmaceutical companies, the biotech companies, or the FDA may share an interest.

## Sources:

- *Dr. Ken Folta – Truth Wiki*
- *BUSTED: This Popular “Independent” Health Website is Deceiving You – Mercola.com*
- *About the FDA Public-Private Partnerships Program – FDA*
- *WebMD Health Profit Jumps On Ad Revenue, Traffic Growth – The Wall Street Journal*