

One month into your first hospital placement as a junior doctor, your team inform you of a 'firm night out' that Friday. They are a great way to bond with the team, always great fun, you are told, as the alcohol flows freely, and the super-friendly rep, Julie picks up the tab.

You have chatted previously to your registrar about 'Pharmaware' and she knows of your reservations regarding drug lunches, but reassures you that there is no mention of work or drugs, it is a social function only, "so, no problem right?".

Questions

- What do you do? Politely decline? Go along and ignore the reps? Something else? (This is a really difficult situation so try to imagine how you would feel.)
- If there is no marketing or educational element to the evening what objections could one have? Are there any other issues not immediately obvious?
- As the reps don't even talk about their drugs, why are they spending so much money on the occasion? Do they have anything to gain?

Further Questions

- Incentives and hospitality are the norm in many professions and industries, yet with the exception of politics no-one seems to object. Is medicine a special case? Should medicine be different? Why?
- A recent survey found that the medical profession remains the most trusted group in the public's perception, although, for right or wrong, the profession no longer enjoys the privileged position it once did. To what extent are we to blame for this change of perception and do we have a responsibility to preserve our reputation?
- What values do the public expect from the modern doctor and is change needed to meet these expectations?