**Doctors, Companies Say Physician Payment Database Contains Errors---**Government Won’t Update ‘Open Payments Database’ With Correct Information Until Next Year

(PETER LOFTUS and JOSEPH WALKER WSJ Oct. 3, 2014)

Companies and doctors say there are a number of errors in a new U.S. government database that discloses pharmaceutical-company and medical-device company payments to physicians—mistakes that doctors complain give the public the wrong impression about their industry ties.

Some companies acknowledge reporting data incorrectly, and some blame the errors on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which collected the data earlier this year and posted it online Tuesday as part of a transparency initiative mandated by the 2010 Affordable Care Act. A CMS spokesman said the agency didn’t inadvertently alter any data during its handling of the information, and that the reporting companies are accountable for accuracy.

Compounding doctor concerns, CMS says it won’t update the “Open Payments” database to reflect the correct information until early next year.

The mistakes include incorrect dollar amounts attributed to individual doctors, as well as incorrect reasons that the payments were made.

….

Boehringer Ingelheim GmbH, for example, says that due to a data entry error it incorrectly reported that it provided $155,772 worth of travel and lodging last year to Reisa Sperling, a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School. That reported amount catapulted Dr. Sperling to the top of the list of physicians receiving travel and lodging from the industry.

Boehringer Ingelheim says the correct amount was only $1,975. The company said it has submitted a correction to CMS.

….

And drug maker [Merck](http://quotes.wsj.com/MRK) & Co. says the database incorrectly reports that it provided $75,000 in travel and lodging to Ranjani Moorthi, assistant professor of medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine. The money wasn’t for travel and lodging, but for a career-development award that Dr. Moorthi had received from the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research, for research related to bone health. Merck provided an unrestricted grant to the medical society, which independently selected Dr. Moorthi as the end recipient.

Merck said it isn’t sure whose fault the error was but that it is looking into the matter.

“This is clearly an error in reporting and should be corrected,” said Ann Elderkin, executive director of the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research.

….