



PHARMACEUTICALS EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

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News / Story reproduced with thanks:- **FiercePharma**

Pfizer tops drug-sampling list with \$2.7B in spending

Direct link to the News/Story:-

<http://www.fiercepharma.com/node/19735/print>

Pfizer ([NYSE: PFE](#) [1]) is by far the biggest distributor of drug samples, new congressional data shows. As *Dow Jones* reports, the world's largest drugmaker handed out \$2.7 billion worth of free samples in 2007. That's almost 7 times the amount distributed by the company in second place: Merck ([NYSE: MRK](#) [2]), with \$356 million. And all together, drugmakers' reported sample spending tops \$3 billion.

The news service obtained the disclosures made to Congress under the healthcare reform bill passed in March. After Pfizer and Merck, the sample spending drops significantly, with Eli Lilly in third place with \$67 million; Wyeth next with \$64 million; Abbott Laboratories with \$32 million; and Baxter International with \$7 million. And that wraps up the list of drugmakers that have submitted sample data so far, so there's no way of knowing where GlaxoSmithKline, Sanofi-Aventis, Novartis or Roche would be ranked. Samples are a key marketing technique for some drugmakers, which use them mostly to promote newer drugs. But the practice of handing out samples has become somewhat controversial, with critics saying that they induce doctors and patients to choose pricier new meds over cheaper alternatives. In fact, some hospitals and clinics--particularly those affiliated with medical schools--have been either refusing free samples, or collecting them in a central repository for distribution to individual doctors.

How does sample spending stack up to other pharma marketing expenses? The *Wall Street Journal Health Blog* points out that the drug industry spent a reported \$20.5 billion-plus on marketing in 2008, with \$12 billion of that paying for sales-rep visits to doctors. And DTC ads accounted for \$4.7 billion of that.