

Anyone who watches television—where the majority of the drug industry’s \$2.5 billion a-year-and-growing advertising budget is spent

The pharmaceutical industry can count on a team of 625 lobbyists—more than the number of members in Congress—to influence legislation seeking to limit the industry’s power or decrease its profits, such as new prescription drug benefit legislation for seniors or prescription drug price controls.

In the 1999-2000 election cycle “drug companies spent more money to influence politicians than did insurance companies, telephone companies, electric companies, commercial banks, oil and gas producers, automakers, tobacco companies, food processors and manufacturers—more, in short, than any other industry,” Greider writes. “Most of that—about \$177 million—went to hire lobbyists from 134 firms, including 21 former members of Congress. The industry also gave \$20 million in campaign contributions and spent \$60 million on issue ads.”

Marketing itself is a big business with pharmaceutical companies. In the US, it is a billion-dollar industry. The conflict between public interest and marketing becomes apparent once a drug becomes available on the market. The company wants returns on the product as quickly as possible given the stiff competition, with the company spending at least 20% of sales on pushing its products - twice more than on research and development. The question we should ask is how far should these companies go in encouraging the use of their drugs?