Worrall, Adam
EDF 5935 Responsible Conduct of Research
Dr. Judy Devine
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Conflicts of Interest Case Study Reaction Paper

Dr. S is clearly a highly respected neurologist specializing in Alzheimer's disease. Bringing the new biotech company, conducting research into Alzheimer's, to the attention of the scientific community would have been perfectly ethical and welcomed if done by a respected neurologist not involved with the firm. However, since Dr. S was a co-founder of the firm and is one of its largest shareholders, he should not have discussed the company's research without providing a disclaimer of his involvement.

Dr. S is certainly allowed to profit from his work with the firm. However, he has likely received substantial financial benefits from having the company's stock go up as more scientists and readers become aware of its research. Such benefits are likely over the $10,000 a year limit imposed by the Public Health Service (PHS) and National Science Foundation (NSF), and Dr. S's university and the three publications may have even lower limits. Dr. S also likely has equity in the firm of over 5%. In addition, it is possible his activities might have involved double-billing his time to both the university and the company. Regulations required that Dr. S disclose this conflict prior to conducting his reviews; do his best to manage, reduce, or eliminate the conflict; and ensure he would not bill twice for his time. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Dr. S did or has any intention of following these regulations.

To resolve these ethical issues, Dr. S should have disclosed his full and complete involvement with the company to everyone involved—university administration, the editors and readers of the three publications, and the biotech firm—prior to publishing his reviews. He should also have offered to not mention this particular firm or its work at all in his review articles, in order to eliminate the conflict of interest and not potentially double-bill his time.