

## NAMI Acknowledges: 56% of Budget Comes from Drug Companies

Wednesday, 06 May 2009

In its response to Sen. Grassley's probe, The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) acknowledges that a majority of its funds over the last five years, 56% on average, have come from drug corporations.

It's time to set the record straight about NAMI: NAMI was founded about 25 years ago. It was then called the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. The name change in recent years is significant: NAMI's rise to become the #1 "advocacy" group in mental health, was almost entirely due to the hefty financial support NAMI has received from the manufacturers of psychotropic drugs--in particular, manufacturers of antidepressants, antipsychotics and anti-seizure drugs. These drugs are at the center of heated controversy given their hazardous effects and overall negative risk / benefit profile.

The name change from "Alliance for the mentally ill" to "Alliance on [for] mental illness" should have alerted its constituents and the public that this organization DOES NOT REPRESENT THE BEST INTEREST of persons suffering from mental illness. NAMI now promotes mental illness and psychotropic drugs.

Until NAMI was forced by Sen Grassley of the Senate Finance Committee to identify its corporate donors it had continually refused to do so.

It remained the task of investigative journalists to do this job--as when Mother Jones reported in 1999 that NAMI received \$11+ million over 5 years from Big Pharma, and an Eli Lilly executive operated out of NAMI's headquarters directing major operations.

Parents and relatives who mobilized for NAMI and stridently pushed its "biologically-based" agenda were duped.

They did not realize that NAMI was greased by millions of dollars from drug manufacturers whose agendas conflicted with the best interest of their loved ones.

They did not realize that the drugs promoted by NAMI were shortening the lives of their loved ones and causing severe, debilitating diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular deaths, and metabolic syndrome.

NAMI parents didn't know that NAMI's president Jim McNulty , from 2002 to 2004, was being paid thousands of dollars from drug companies for promoting their products to NAMI parents.

NAMI parents didn't know that NAMI's executive director, was paid a salary of \$212,281 and another \$10,090 in employee benefit contributions and deferred compensation plans.

NAMI's capitulation to drug manufacturers--receiving fees for services rendered--represents a colossal betrayal of trust:

Eli Lilly, Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, et al, provided the \$\$\$\$ and NAMI rendered lobbying and promotional services.

This has been a shameful, base, and unholy alliance that the late Dr. Loren Moshe, our friend and AHRP board member, decried in 1999:

"The shortsightedness of this marriage of convenience between APA [American Psychiatric Association], NAMI, and the drug companies(who gleefully support both groups because of their shared pro-drug stance) is an abomination. I want no part of a psychiatry of oppression and social control."

NAMI leadership have exploited parents' troubles and predicaments to steer them into becoming drug pushers who serve industry's agenda--to increase corporate profits.

Parents became lobbyists for drug manufacturers--not for life-sustaining services for their loved ones; NAMI parents demanded taxpayer subsidies for hazardous drugs that are shown to shorten lives. Psychotropic drug cocktails are undermining the mental and physical health of the people suffering from a mental disorder.

Parents became unwitting partners of a corrupt industry: an industry that concealed evidence of drug-induced harm, and laid claim to false, unsubstantiated "benefits."

Below we reproduce a letter of "explanation" by NAMI's executive director to its membership following the Senate Finance Committee probe.

Once and for all, let's just call NAMI an industry front group: NAMI has sold its raison d'etre sacrificing the welfare of its constituents for industry cash handouts.

Indeed, we believe that NAMI qualifies for an award for Really Deceitful Shameful Practices masquerading as patient advocates.

Posted by Vera Hassner Sharav

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<http://www.mindfreedom.org/kb/psych-drug-corp/nami>

LETTER FROM NAMI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MICHAEL J. FITZPATRICK:

April 28, 2009

Dear NAMI Leaders and Members,

On April 6, 2009 Senator Charles Grassley asked NAMI national to provide information about support it receives from pharmaceutical companies. For the last three years, Senator Grassley has been interested in various aspects of the pharmaceutical industry and has made similar requests to other non-profit groups.

NAMI shares Senator Grassley's interest in transparency and has cooperated fully with this request. Since the request was made, three basic questions have been posed that are worth sharing and answering.

Does NAMI accept contributions from pharmaceutical companies?

Yes, we do -- and we're delighted to have this critical support for our many programs and important work all across the country.

NAMI accepts charitable contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations, including the pharmaceutical industry, for one purpose -- to improve the lives of people with mental illness and their families. These relationships are governed by NAMI's Guidelines for Business Support Relationships, a NAMI policy originally developed and approved by

the Board of Directors in 2004. This policy ensures that at all times NAMI will maintain an independent position on issues affecting the welfare of people with mental illness. A copy of this policy is available online at <http://www.nami.org/BusinessGuidelines>.

As you know from our strategic plan ( <http://www.nami.org/stratplan> ), NAMI's goal is to reduce the percentage of our budget that is supported by charitable donations from pharmaceutical companies.

While we deeply appreciate the support we have received, we set this goal because we understand the value of diversifying our funding sources -- both for fiscal stability and because we want to shed any lingering, unfair accusations that somehow NAMI has been "bought" -- I can assure you: nothing could be further from the truth. NAMI's advocacy voice is loud and clear and uncompromised.

As reported to Senator Grassley, pharmaceutical companies contributed an average of 56% of national NAMI's budget annually for the period

2005 to 2009. Many of NAMI's signature education programs, including Family-to-Family, Peer-to-Peer, NAMI Connection, In Our Own Voice and NAMI Basics have national corporate sponsors.

These programs are the essence of your work in your communities. They are offered free of charge to thousands of consumers and families who participate in them each year. Without support of these companies, we would be hard-pressed to bring you these vital programs. Corporate grants and charitable contributions also support the NAMI Web site, Mental Illness Awareness Week, and other public education and advocacy efforts.

Can we see who is giving NAMI what?

Yes, you can.

NAMI National has long made public lists of major corporate and foundation donors in our annual reports, which you can view online: <http://www.nami.org/governance> .

In 2009, we have begun posting on the NAMI Web site on a quarterly basis all foundation and corporate grants and corporate contributions over \$5,000 received by NAMI national. The first list covers January- March 2009 and can also be viewed at <http://www.nami.org/governance>.

Now what?

We continue our incredibly important work together, at the national, state and local level, on behalf of one of the most vulnerable and discriminated against populations in our country.

NAMI has long enjoyed a great national reputation. In fact, NAMI is one of only 248 national non-profit organizations that received the BBB Wise Giving Alliance Charity Seal this year from the charity monitoring organization affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

Perhaps you saw BBB's adds in USA Today two weeks ago which heralded the exclusive list. NAMI also received three out of four stars from Charity Navigator and is its number one rated mental health organization.

Thank you for the tremendous work you do, day in and day out. If you have any thoughts or questions, I hope you will be in touch.

Thanks,

Mike

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, MSW

Executive Director

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300

Arlington, VA 2201

[mfitzpatrick@nami.org](mailto:mfitzpatrick@nami.org)

703-516-7977

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US Senate Probe Discovers:

Most NAMI Money is From Psychiatric Drug Industry

by MindFreedom News

NAMI has admitted to a US Senate probe that a majority of their funds over the last five years, 56 percent on average, have been from drug corporations. NAMI has agreed with the probe to immediately begin quarterly postings to their web site with a list of drug company donations and amounts.

MindFreedom obtained a letter sent last week by NAMI executive director Michael J. Fitzpatrick to "NAMI Leaders and Members." The letter is a response to the probe of NAMI by US Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) initiated on 6 April 2009.

In the 28 April letter, copied below, Mr. Fitzpatrick wrote, "As reported to Senator Grassley, pharmaceutical companies contributed an average of 56% of national NAMI's budget annually for the period 2005- 2009."

Mr. Fitzpatrick passionately defends the drug company donations, but says NAMI has a strategic plan to lower the percentage.

Commented MindFreedom director, David Oaks, "The NAMI board should have listened to its own Consumer Council

which voted for full disclosure many years ago, but was ignored."

MindFreedom maintains a count of the number of times the NAMI web site uses the phrase "biologically based" when referring to mental health problems. Said Oaks, "There are as many theories about the cause of extreme mental problems as there are colors in the rainbow.

Unfortunately, NAMI's rainbow is mainly green -- drug company money green. Now we know why."

MindFreedom is encouraging an international "thank you" from everyone to Senator Grassley for investigating psychiatric drug money corruption, click here:

<http://grassley.senate.gov/contact.cfm>

LISTEN and CALL-IN LIVE to a special free online MindFreedom web radio show this Saturday, 9 May 2009, about protesting psychiatric drug company corruption. More info is available here: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/davidwoaks>

To track the number of "biologically based" references on the NAMI web site over the years click here:

<http://tinyurl.com/nami-biologically-based>

For a news report by Bloomberg from 6 April 2009 about the letter by Sen. Grassley to NAMI click here:

<http://tinyurl.com/grassley-to-nami>

To thank Sen. Grassley for investigating NAMI funding click here:

<http://grassley.senate.gov/contact.cfm>