

### Helping indigent patients obtain medications

**P**harmaceutical companies, through detailers and assistance programs, offer resources for helping our financially strapped patients.

**Drug company representatives.** Doctors may consider visits from drug reps a waste of time, but we can give the coupons and free drug samples they offer to indigent, disabled, or working-poor patients who often cannot afford the psychotropics they need.

To make meetings with detailers more productive:

- Be clear about your needs, expectations, and how much time you are willing to spend.
- Be frank about whether you want to hear about studies. Tell the detailer that you'll accept information by request only.
- State specific dates and times you are available.
- Request coupons for patients whose medication samples are likely to be lost or stolen.

**Patient assistance programs.** Pharmaceutical companies' assistance programs provide deeply discounted drugs to patients in need (*Box*). The paperwork to qualify takes minutes for clinician and patient to fill out, and many forms are available online or via fax.

**Dr. Sellinger** is medical director of ClearView Center, a nonprofit community mental health agency in Albany, NY.

#### Box

#### Pharmaceutical companies' patient assistance programs

**Solvay Pharmaceuticals**

800-256-8918

**Ortho McNeil Pharmaceutical**

800-577-3788

**Abbott Laboratories**

800-222-6885

**Wyeth**

800-568-9938

**Merck and Co.**

800-994-2111

**GlaxoSmithKline**

800-728-4368

**AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals**

800-424-3727;

[www.astrazeneca-us.com/content/drugAssistance/](http://www.astrazeneca-us.com/content/drugAssistance/)

**Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.**

800-736-0003

**Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp.**

800-277-2254

**Forest Pharmaceuticals**

800-851-0758;

<http://www.forestpharm.com/pap/>

**Pfizer Inc.**

800-707-8990

**Cephalon**

800-511-2120