



Pfizer Fined Just £34,800 For Promoting Vaccine Before Authorisation. When Will Bosses Face Real Consequences?

Description

UK : In November 2020, Dr. Berkeley Phillips, the Medical Director of Pfizer U.K., shared a post from a fellow employee on Twitter that said:

Our vaccine candidate is 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 and 94% effective in people over 65 years old. We will file all of our data with health authorities within days. Thank you to every volunteer in our trial and to all who are tirelessly fighting this pandemic.

Four other Pfizer U.K. colleagues re-tweeted the same post. Pfizer also identified four more U.K.-based colleagues who liked the tweet.

In the U.K., the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority (PMCPA) is the self-regulatory body which administers the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) Code of Practice for the industry.

In a recent report, the PMCPA Panel noted the “tweet clearly referred to the outcome of the Pfizer and BioNTech’s vaccine being developed to protect against COVID-19. The Panel noted that Clause 3.1 prohibited the promotion of a medicine prior to the grant of its marketing authorisation”.

In breach of the code, the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority (PMCPA) charged Pfizer administrative costs of £34,800 for this breach.

To put this into context, Pfizer’s revenues jumped to \$81.3 billion in 2021, up from \$41.7 billion in 2020. So, £34,800 equates to 0.00005% of Pfizer’s 2021 revenues. Or, to put it another way, Pfizer earned about \$154,680 per minute in 2021, so the fine equates to roughly 17 seconds of Pfizer’s revenues.

Pfizer has already been reprimanded six times for its promotion of the COVID-19 vaccine.

This latest fine comes after Pfizer’s Chief Executive, Dr. Albert Bourla, was found guilty in November 2022 of misleading U.K. parents over the safety of the Covid vaccine for children.

Bourla told the BBC, “People will be likely to need to have annual Covid vaccinations for many years to come.” He thought this would be necessary to maintain a “very high level of protection”.

He also told that bastion of truth the BBC that immunising children in the U.K. and Europe would be a “very good idea”.

“Covid in schools is thriving,” he said.

“This is disturbing, significantly, the educational system, and there are kids that will have severe symptoms. So there is no doubt in my mind that the benefits, completely, are in favour of doing it.”

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The U.K. regulator found Pfizer guilty of violating three PMCPA code of practice sections.

But do you think this mattered to Dr. Albert Bourla? By the way, Albert is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine; he’s done very well out of the pandemic. In 2021, he was named CEO of the Year by CNN Business.

His estimated net worth is at least \$35.6 Million as of February 23rd 2024. Albert owns over 127,674 units of Pfizer stock worth over \$12,123,852, and over the last 10 years he has sold stock worth over \$5,557,386. But this is chicken feed compared to his remuneration of \$17,929,000 as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer at Pfizer.

But a month after Bourla had taken the BBC for a ride, he was back on the stock exchange’s trading floors: the largest trade he ever made was exercising 222,328 units of Pfizer stock on December 15th 2022, worth over \$6,058,438.

Dr. Phillips, the U.K.’s Medical Director for Pfizer, said the social media post was “accidental and unintentional”. Yet, everything at this level is fine-tuned to promote the stock price and further the pharmaceutical agenda.

Promoting an unlicensed medicine or unauthorised indication is a criminal offence. The penalty is a fine or imprisonment for up to two years. We think it’s about time someone faced an actual penalty rather than pennies for breaches of the code.

by Dr. Carl Heneghan and Dr. Tom Jeferson

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