

Direct to Consumer Advertising: The Consumer Perspective

FTC Health Care Workshop

September 10, 2002

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DTC Promotion

- Educates and informs consumers
- Must be fairly balanced – risks and benefits
- Should not create unreasonable expectations
- Must be clear and understandable
- Can lead to discussions with doctor on appropriate use of medicines

Today's Presentation

- 1) Sources of health information
- 2) Communication between health professional and patient/consumer
- 3) Consumer response to DTC ads
- 4) Are DTC ads effectively communicating risks and benefits?
- 5) Prescription for reform of DTC promotion

1) Sources of Health Information for Consumers

Sources of Health Information

- Friends, family or co-workers – 70%
- Doctor, nurse or health professional – 65%
- Health plan – 37%
- Go online – 28%
- Order a printed booklet – 21%
- Contact a state agency – 20%
- Call a toll-free number – 18%
- Newspaper or magazine – 17%

Trust in Information Sources About Prescription Drugs

- Percent who say they trust each of the following sources “a lot” to provide accurate information about prescription drugs:
 - Doctor – 76%
 - Pharmacist – 70%
 - Rx package info – 48%
 - Government agencies – 37%
 - Health Web sites – 9%
 - DTC ads – 6%

2) Impact of Information on Patient/Physician Relationship

Changing Relationship

- Patients want to be partners with their doctor
- Internet greatest driving force – quality and depth of information
- Informed patient – some doctors threatened

NCL Focus Groups, 2001-2002

Patients – Doing Their “Homework”

- Reading magazines, tearing out articles and advertisements
- Online searches
- Word-of-mouth communication with friends and family

NCL Focus Groups, 2001-2002

Doctors Discuss Impact of Information

- Information from Internet and ads may conflict with professional opinion
- Patients cannot sort out which findings are scientific
- Culling of good information from the bad occurs in the exam room, where time is already scarce

NCL Focus Groups, 2001-2002

3) Consumer Response to DTC Promotion

Do ads prompt discussion with doctor?

- 70% asked doctor for more information, 28% asked for a prescription
- 21 million discussed a medical condition with doctor that they had not discussed before

Has an ad ever caused you to ask a doctor about a medical condition of your own that you had not talked to a doctor about before?

Yes – 18% (2002)

Yes – 27% (1999)

FDA Preliminary Survey Results, 2002

Of the 30% who talked to a doctor about medicine they saw advertised, did the doctor:

- Give the Rx asked for – 44%
- Recommend lifestyle change – 35%
- Recommend different Rx drug – 25%
- Recommend no drug – 19%
- Recommend an OTC drug – 15%
- Something else – 14%

Increased Utilization of Rx drugs

- Worrisome if caused by unnecessary, improper prescribing
- Doctors must prescribe appropriately
- DTC ads must be useful, truthful, complete, and not create unreasonable expectations

4) Is DTC Advertising
Effectively Communicating Risk
and Benefit Information?

Do you think ads increase knowledge about medicines?

- Always/sometimes – 76%
- Rarely/never – 22%

NCL Survey, 1998

Do ads increase consumer knowledge about disease?

- Always/sometimes – 67%
- Rarely/never – 31%

Knowledge gained from ads

- After seeing ads:
 - 70% knew little or nothing more about the health condition for which the drug was indicated
 - 59% knew little or nothing more about the medicine

Kaiser Survey, 2001

Risk Information - Broadcast

- “With the exception of one of the side effects mentioned in [one] ad, about half or more of respondents could not correctly identify the potential side effects after having just viewed the ad.”

Risk Information – Print

- Over 50% thought print advertising did only a “fair” or “poor” job of communicating serious warnings about the product.

Prevention Survey, 2000

Brief Summary

- Generally not useful – dense, long, technical
- 54% read half, little or none (FDA)
- 55% found it somewhat or very hard to understand (FDA)

5) Rx for Reform of DTC Promotion

- New regulations
- Reformat brief summary – plain language, include most serious, frequent side effects
- Standardize risk and benefit information
- Include health professionals – respond to consumer inquiries with information (brand and generic, alternative therapies)