Direct-to-Consumer Advertising of Prescription Drugs

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising of drugs has been legal in the USA since 1985, but only really took off in 1997 when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) eased up on a rule obliging companies to offer a detailed list of side-effects in their (long format television commercials. Since that time, the pharmaceutical industry has poured money into this form of promotion, spending billions annually on ad campaigns.

The Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) discourages the use of direct-to-consumer advertising that promotes specific prescription drug products, but supports the ads that educate the public about disease symptoms and available treatment options.

- Advertising that increases public awareness about disease symptoms, informs consumers about available treatment options and diagnostic procedures that may be of benefit, and encourages people to pursue healthy lifestyles, can improve the health status of patients.

- AMCP supports FDA oversight of DTC advertising to ensure it focuses on raising awareness of disease and symptoms, addresses alternative treatment options; describes both benefits and potential risks and stimulates patient/provider dialogue.

- AMCP strongly discourages advertising aimed at consumers that promotes the use of specific prescription drug products. Such ads aim to increase a product’s market share or create a new market for the product and can often be misleading because they typically fail to sufficiently warn consumers about the potential risks of using the product, fail to inform them about alternative treatment options, and fail to provide information about cost issues.

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The Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) is a national professional association of pharmacists and other health care practitioners who serve society by the application of sound medication management principles and strategies to assist patients achieving positive therapeutic outcomes. The Academy’s 6,000 members develop and provide a diversified range of clinical, educational and business management services and strategies on behalf of the more than 200 million Americans covered by a managed care pharmacy benefit. More news and information about AMCP can be obtained on its website, at www.amcp.org.