

CASE AUTH/2058/10/07

NO BREACH OF THE CODE

PRIMARY CARE TRUST CHIEF PHARMACIST v PFIZER

Champix journal advertisement

The chief pharmacist at a primary care trust queried whether an advertisement for Champix (varenicline) placed by Pfizer in the Health Service Journal (HSJ) was in breach of the Code because the journal was available to those who were not health professionals.

The Panel noted that the HJS was a specialist professional title and described itself as a leading source of news and information on health management and policy.

The Code covered the promotion of medicines to health professionals and appropriate administrative staff. The Code required that material was tailored to the audience to whom it was directed. In the Panel's view it was acceptable for companies to advertise medicines in the HJS provided the advertisement was appropriate for the audience.

The advertisement at issue described, in simple terms, how Champix worked, compared its quit rate with that of another medicine or placebo and referred to its safety and tolerability profile in 4,000 patients. The Panel considered that the content of the advertisement was appropriate for a health professional/NHS management audience. The advertisement was not an advertisement to the public and no breach was ruled.

The chief pharmacist at a primary care trust complained about an advertisement (ref CHA055a) for Champix (varenicline) placed by Pfizer Limited in the Health Service Journal, 11 October 2007.

COMPLAINT

The complainant stated that she was surprised to see an advertisement for Champix in the Health Service Journal (HSJ). As this journal was available to those who were not health professionals, she wondered whether the advertisement breached the Code.

When writing to Pfizer, the Authority asked it to respond in relation to Clauses 12.1 and 20.1 of the Code.

RESPONSE

Pfizer stated that its policy had always been to advertise prescription only medicines (POMs) only in journals that were distributed and read by health

professionals and appropriate administrative staff. The main audience for Pfizer's current advertisement included primary and secondary care doctors, nurses, hospital pharmacists, smoking cessation advisers and members of the hospital management and administrative staff responsible for budgeting and resource allocation within NHS trusts.

The HSJ was distributed to members of the health professions and appropriate healthcare management and administrative staff. Additionally, as stated on its website, the journal was 'Targeted at healthcare professionals, it is an integrated online resource and magazine'. Pfizer submitted that the advertisement in the HSJ had not breached either Clause 12.1 or Clause 20.1 and had complied with both the spirit and the letter of the Code.

PANEL RULING

The Panel noted that the HSJ was a specialist professional title which described itself as a leading source of news and information on health management and policy.

The Code covered the promotion of medicines to health professionals and appropriate administrative staff. The Code required that material was tailored to the audience to whom it was directed. In the Panel's view it was acceptable for companies to advertise medicines in the HSJ provided the advertisement was appropriate for the audience.

The advertisement at issue described, in simple terms, how Champix worked, compared its quit rate with that of another medicine or placebo and referred to its safety and tolerability profile in 4,000 patients. The Panel considered that the content of the advertisement was appropriate for a health professional/NHS management audience and thus ruled no breach of Clause 12.1.

The Panel did not accept that the advertisement was an advertisement to the public. The Panel therefore ruled no breach of Clause 20.1.

Complaint received	16 October 2007
Case completed	5 December 2007