
Reprint

Results from FDA Physician Survey on DTC Advertising

Review of presented by **Kathryn Aikin**, Social Science Analyst, DDMAC, FDA at the Pharmaceutical Marketing Global Summit hosted by the Strategic Research Institute (www.srinstitute.com) and held in Philadelphia, PA on January 12-14, 2003.

In this presentation Aikin disclosed preliminary results from the FDA's Physician Survey, which looked at the impact of DTC advertising on the doctor-patient relationship. The survey profiled 250 GP's and 250 specialists (dermatology, allergy/pulmonology, endocrinology, and psychiatry) from a random sample of the AMA Physician Masterfile, which includes a list of all U.S. medical school graduates.

The results confirm that DTC advertising, when done correctly, can serve positive public health functions such as increasing patient awareness of diseases that can be treated, and prompting thoughtful discussions with physicians that result in needed treatments being prescribed - often not the treatment in the DTC advertisement. This study also demonstrates that most physicians view DTC advertisements as one of many factors that affect their practice and their interactions with patients, both positively and, in some respects, negatively.

Ninety-two percent (92%) of the physicians surveyed said that they have had a patient initiate a discussion about a drug they saw advertised. Almost one quarter (23%) of the physicians surveyed say they get questions about advertised drugs all the time and 71% say the frequency of these interactions have increased over the past 5 years.

The doctors who had a recent discussion with a patient who asked about an advertised drug were asked questions about the most recent such interaction. Two fifths (41%) of these docs thought that the interaction was beneficial. The most cited benefit (53%) was "better discussion with patient" followed closely (42%) by "patient more aware of treatments."

On the problem side of the equation, 18% of the docs who had such an interaction felt that it created problems for them. The biggest problems cited were "Time correcting misconceptions" (41%) and "Drug not needed/did not have condition" (26%). Nevertheless, 88% of the patients who asked about an advertised drug had the condition that the drug treats.

Some other interesting results:

- Doctors gave prescriptions 75% of the time to patients who asked for one.
- When patients asked for a prescription for a specific drug, the doctor obliged 57% of the time.
- Most doctors surveyed (91%) did NOT feel that patients tried to influence treatment in a way that would be harmful to them.
- When asked generally about the amount of pressure they felt to prescribe a drug during a visit in which a patient asked about an advertised drug, 53% of physicians reported feeling no pressure to prescribe. However, when the patient asked the

- physician to prescribe a specific brand name drug, the percentage of physicians who report feeling no pressure drops to 39%.
- Only 40 percent of physicians believe that patients understood very well or somewhat well the possible risks and negative effects of an advertised drug from the DTC ad alone.

For more information and a copy of the presentation visit FDA's website at www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/ANSWERS/2003/ANS01189.html.

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