



# Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Helping pharmacists achieve excellence

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Dear Sir/Madam

## **Draft Report on Current Practice with Regard to Provision of Information to Patients on Medicinal Products**

We only received this consultation yesterday via our publications department so unfortunately we will not be able to submit a full response to meet your deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June.

However, information for patients is an area that the Society has done a considerable amount of policy work on and we retain a strong interest in it. I have provided a summary of our existing policies on this area below.

The Society makes a distinction between advertising and information on medicines. Our position on direct to consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines is that the demand for information about prescribed medicines from patients and the public is likely to increase, but DTCA is unlikely to be the best way of providing it because the aim of advertising is to persuade, not to give balanced information about benefits and risks. DTCA, moreover, carries a significant risk of exposing more patients to the adverse effects of new drugs. If DTCA is successful, it may well adversely affect doctor-patient relationships, distort public health priorities and disrupt the cost controls operated by the NHS. The Society therefore supports increased provision of balanced information to the public, while taking into account the above points."

We support the provision of balanced, evidence-based, accurate and accessible information on:

- a medical condition
- the range of treatment and care options available
- comparison of medicines of a similar type, or for the same condition
- a single medicine.

An information strategy for patients needs to address the challenges of:

- different cultural and language requirements
- differing levels of education
- access to the internet
- the restrictions on activity imposed by serious illness
- different circumstances such as suspected or diagnosed disease.

The Society supports and promotes an approach to the prescribing and taking of medicines involving negotiation between a patient and a health care professional, resulting in an agreement that accords primacy to the beliefs and wishes of the patient (concordance).

The creation of national or international standards for patient information could protect the public from misleading or biased information. Patients and patient groups should play a key role in setting such standards alongside healthcare professionals including pharmacists, informatics experts and other stakeholders.

Best practice in providing information for patients needs to be identified, evaluated and more widely disseminated, and patients and the public should be involved in the preparation of information.

The Society's reports on DTCA can be found on our website:

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines: a review of international policy and evidence. A report for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. November 2001 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarep.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines: a review of international policy and evidence. A report for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. November 2001. Executive Summary (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcaexec.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines: a review of international policy and evidence. Supplement to a report for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. November 2001 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: first quarterly update - January to March 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0203.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: second quarterly update - April to June 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0206.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: third quarterly update - July to September 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0209.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: fourth quarterly update - October to December 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0212.pdf>)

We would be keen to collaborate with the European Commission on any future work on information for patients.

Yours faithfully



Eileen Neilson  
Head of Policy Development