

# **AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL HAZARDS OF DRUG ADVERTISEMENTS**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article explains the significance of spreading awareness regarding the false advertisements of the pharmaceutical products to that will prevent the consumers from the potential risks. The certain team was gathered to have a conversation regarding this topic and presented an alternative solution to overcome this. Wherein certain analysis was conducted which consists of misunderstanding of the consumers following the false advertisements which are spreading false information of the pharmaceutical product. Through analyzing the findings of the focus group, perception among health care workers about the threats pharmaceutical ads can present to customers. The end result will be to emphasize that when seeking credible health-related advice, consumers should use health care workers, such as community pharmacists, as the primary source of information. Inappropriate languages are used in introducing the pharmaceutical products which may also leads to a wrong perception of an individual towards the product. Images and photographs are the major aspects that misleads an individual to purchase an inappropriate pharmaceutical product. There is a need to stop delivering this false advertisements which can cause harm to public.

**KEYWORDS:** Awareness, Consumers, False advertisements, Pharmaceutical products, Risks.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Advertising can be traced back to ancient Babylonia and China three thousand years ago. Criers who stood on street corners or at ancient sport competitions were screaming out promotional advertisements in those early times. Today, advertisement is widely used and they are presented to billions of people. Pharmaceutical advertising has become an important part of everyday life. Of example, a newly released prescription-only analgesic (painkiller) can be used in television advertisements or magazines in some countries such as the US or, in countries where such ads are forbidden, provocative advertisements about such drugs are commonly used [1].

Earlier, when there was no media exposure in the counties, the advertisements were made by the individuals with a banner in hand standing along the road side and shouting the messages regarding the products represented on the banner which they are willing to sell or at the sports events, where the advertisement is done by using the posters showing the pictures and name of the product along with the specific quotation by which the product can be identified easily [2].

Later on, Televisions and radios were introduced. Then it becomes the popular source of advertisements. Whenever a new drug is manufactured, it is exposed in the market, the advertisements are released on the televisions or in the magazines in some countries such as US, so the consumers gets attracted to buy that particular product.

Some studies have pointed out the negative impact of direct-to-consumer ads on customers and health care workers, and many concerns against direct-to-consumer advertising have been made. The drawbacks include trivializing prescription medicines that may potentially have harmful effects, ignoring objective information, and often downplaying the potential risks of pharmaceutical products. Studies have found out that a direct-to-consumer ad does not show a net benefit to the public health system [3].

Furthermore, a literature review suggested that much of the work that has been carried out so far has not examined the psychological risks or dangers that pharmaceutical ads may present to consumers. It is important

for pharmacists and other health care workers to be aware of the risks presented by these ads and to be able to educate customers about these risks. Literature has shown that ads use two main psychological devices, namely persuasion and emotion, to produce the desired effect. Researchers say an advertisement's most common goal is to convince. Therefore, when exposed to ads, the role of persuasion is to change the opinion, behavior or attitude of consumers. Persuasion is also concerned with feelings that are often used in advertising as a powerful marketing device. Studies have shown that in pharmaceutical ads, emotion plays a vital role. Researchers indicated that different emotional factors, such as the fear of death, insecurity, self-consciousness, guilt, and accountability, were used in direct-to-consumer ads to convince customers [4].

When customers are unable to interpret the message of a particular advertisement, a customer will be more sensitive to the information related to the advertisement. Therefore, convincing and emotional signals will be used to help the user reach a conclusion on the advertising. Such signals will be mostly positive in order to ensure that customers do not ignore ads as is the case with negative indications.

A world-renowned semiotician, through a decoding technique, established that advertisements "cook" nature by demonstrating, for instance, the transformation of raw materials into the final product. He used a vitamin supplement commercial as an example. The orange peel is seen just below it with an orange-colored vitamin bottle. It can be argued in this case that consumers are likely led to assume that this vitamin tablet is just as good as the fruit. This scenario clearly shows that a pictorial aspect is used to convince customers to establish a positive vitamin advertisement perception [5].

Another world-renowned semiotics demonstrated that how empathy can be used as a convincing tool in an antidepressant advertisement for senior citizens. He demonstrated this by using a visual term, mixed layout versus disjunction layout. In the top half of the commercial, a grandma who is not part of the family (disjunction) and the whole family together in the bottom. Between these two opposite images, the name of the drug appears. This advertisement shows how emotion is used to improve its persuasive value in the form of family separation.

This article discusses the findings of a focus group that was part of a larger study conducted to investigate the impact on customers of printed pharmaceutical ads. Through analyzing the findings of the focus group, perception among health care workers about the threats pharmaceutical ads can present to customers. The end result will be to emphasize that when seeking credible health-related advice, consumers should use health care workers, such as community pharmacists, as the primary source of information [6].

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

A subjective and explorative method was utilized to decide the impression of buyers with respect to pharmaceutical ads. A specific group was led to distinguish how an example of buyers decipher and see pharmaceutical commercials. This took into account the recognizable proof of explicit subjects that could be investigated in more detail. A choice was taken to direct just one specific group. Its motivation was to get data for a poll for survey of the consumers.

The gathering of the participants for the analysis was led inside the "Nelson Mandela Metropole", Eastern Cape, and South Africa. The group comprised of buyers inside the "Nelson Mandela Metropole" who were chosen by methods for an accommodation test. An assorted group of 5 members (n=5) from various financial foundations were chosen to partake. Researchers express that a selected group comprises of 5 to 10 members. At first eight members were chosen to take an interest yet 3 dropped toward the beginning of the selection of the members. In this manner, the example comprised of a group of 5 members (n=5) from various financial foundations. Table 1 distinguishes the socioeconomics of the 6 members. An advantageous time at night was chosen to lead the group-discussion as a large portion of the members were working during the day. Customized solicitations were sent to every member seven days preceding the date of the discussion about the selected group. Every greeting expressed the beginning time, date, and area just as a verbal and composed outline of the examination. Two days subsequent to conveying the solicitations, every member was reached, with their authorization, to guarantee their support. The selected groups were updated by sending a text message on their respective cell phones.

**Table 1: Demographic details of the participants**

Participant	Age (in years)	Gender	Occupation
1	20	Female	Student
2	24	Male	Accountant
3	24	Female	Teacher
4	25	Male	Chemical engineer
5	26	Male	Leather technologies

The selected group was driven by a facilitator who set up a casual climate, listened effectively and enabled members to partake. A Master's student in Psychology, who had been prepared in bunch forms, and with no pharmaco-lawful information, was chosen to go about as facilitator. The facilitator was given the necessary verbal data with respect to the examination. The specialist went about as right hand to the facilitator by assisting with the account of the discussion.

A protocol of selected group was created to manage the facilitator in leading the selected group. The convention comprised of two exercises, a presentation and two groups tasks. During the presentation, members were invited and helped to remember the exercises to be led and given an outline of the examination. An ice-breaker was likewise used to enable members to get familiar. The protocol was given to the facilitator seven days preceding the examination to take into account acclimation with the type of the selected group [7].

Community task one consisted of the following open-ended questions regarding their views about the printed advertising (i.e. advertising found in magazines and newspapers, for example). Team Task Two consisted of four questions used to address pharmaceutical advertising issues in different ways. The four questions were regarding the effects of the pharmaceutical advertisements on the consumer's emotion, whether it misleads them or not. Whether it is difficult to understand medication advertisements, whether the ads or the colored pictures draws their attention or not.

**III. RESULTS**

**1. Task one**

An early on question about their assessments with respect to any type of commercial was presented to the members. They felt that the picture of the publicized item assumes a job and that there is an unmistakable connection between its picture and its expense. The fact was additionally raised that a promotion must strike, along these lines standing out for consumers. What's more, it was believed that a notice ought to be valuable and in this manner give the important guidelines or bearings.

**2. Task two:**

**Table 2: Thematic headings and themes identified in group task two**

Topics	Thematic headings	Themes
Emotional advertising	Emotional impact	Attention
		Desperation and death
Misleading advertisement		Irrelevant and false issues
Comprehension of pharmaceutical advertisements	Understanding pharmaceutical advertisements	Degree of understanding
		Information provided
Aesthetics	Appeal	Attraction

In bunch task two, four prompts were utilized to aid the discussion of the accompanying themes: the passionate effect, deceiving nature, fathom ability of pharmaceutical commercials, just as the feel utilized. Table 2

distinguishes the thematic headings, where appropriate, and their subjects for every one of these points talked about.

All the group participants came to an agreement that there is an emotional impact on the product's advertisements, particularly when experiencing ceaseless infections, for example, diabetes and hypertension. Two subjects rose up out of the discussion of this theme, in particular consideration and distress and demise. Members accepted that the point of pharmaceutical commercials is to stand out for consumers. It was referenced that silliness can be viably utilized to stand out. The conviction was that diversion can quickly and effectively pull in a buyer's consideration.

The task featured the publicizing of thinning and "muscle-gaining" products. The members whined that such commercials join photos of male and female models to make the thought that an individual who utilizes these items will look like the models. One of the male members contended that buyers are regularly misdirected and not constantly mindful that such items must be utilized related to an eating regimen or exercise program. The group was in consensus with these commercials are intended to delude buyers into purchasing the items publicized.

With the second theme, distress and death, respondents agreed that people in distress, especially those dealing with chronic diseases or those who are dying, will be more affected by pharmaceutical ads directed at them. A female participant agreed that if one wants to be safe from disease they generally believes on any advertisements quickly. One of the male participants agreed that the person who is suffering from the severe disease like cancer already knows that he/she will die soon so they never think the reality behind the advertisements, they just believe it blindly in order to live a little bit longer. Another female participant agreed with these views, that fear of death and losing all will make the people do anything.

Another important issue raised was that pharmaceutical ads that make false and misleading statements can often threaten vulnerable consumers. One male participant thought that economics was playing a role in advertisement in which advertisers were targeting ads to vulnerable individuals. His explanation was, if someone has Aids or cancer, they addresses the people with the help of the medium of advertisement that they are healing, just for the money. A female participant also argued that many of the people exposed to such advertisements are often uneducated and are unable to differentiate between what is true and what is false. She said that there could be millions of people out there who don't know this help yet.

Literature study suggested that ads are convincing in nature and that emotion is used to accomplish this. A persuasive nature is achieved when favorable arguments are used in advertisements. Consumers may develop a positive attitude towards these claims during cognitive processing, resulting in persuasion. Aspects to elicit emotion in this situation can be used as a good argument.

This raises the question of whether such advertising is ethical in nature in these cases. The World Health Organization describes ethical standards for pharmaceutical ads as requirements that "lay the foundation for proper behavior in marketing medical drugs, in accordance with the quest for truthfulness and justice". This process of making profits is often used by many pharmaceutical ads. One can only think of awareness campaigns or print ads for treating erectile dysfunction and chronic conditions like obesity, cholesterol, and diabetes where such advertisements demonstrate healthy and positive end results. Whether such ads are factual and just in keeping with the recommendations of the World Health Organization can be disputed [8].

It was also believed that consumers are often faced with irrelevant and false information. It has been stated that certain drugs are presented as definite cures in advertising, when this is in reality a false notion. It was also believed that some drug advertisements often overlook the information needed by consumers to make informed buying decisions. It is possible to follow the recommendations of the World Health Organization to ensure that correct information is included in pharmaceutical ads targeted at the general public. Such guidelines recommend that vital information will appear in these print ads, such as major use indication(s), any alerts, major contraindications, and any precautions. However, in pharmaceutical advertising, most countries have ethical guidelines and rules for specific information. Most pharmaceutical companies and advertising agencies still print pharmaceutical ads that do not conform to them, even with these standards and regulations in place [9].

An advertisement showing a man climbing a mountain for a well-known HIV / AIDS clinic in South Africa. This may lead the user to believe that at any point of this disease he / she may become healthy and enjoy life as shown by a healthy man walking in the mountains. The man is supposed to have HIV / AIDS but seems to be well enough and fit for a hiking trip after receiving this medication. The photograph sketches the idea that if they take the medication, they will be as safe as shown by the man, regardless of the disease level [10].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The focus group discussed the aforementioned various issues. These are valid concerns that need to be taken into account when reflecting on pharmaceutical ads ethical standards. It must be remembered that so-called health-related services such as pharmaceutical ads should be accountable to a much higher ethical standard than any other form of publicity. South Africa should ensure compliance with these ethical rules and guidelines by pharmaceutical companies and advertising agencies.

Therefore, the ultimate objective should be to ensure that these ethical rules and guidelines are mandatory under South African law and the WHO. While this may not be feasible, steps should be taken to disseminate the belief among customers that health care workers, such as community pharmacists, are the best sources of health care knowledge. Therefore, it is the duty of community pharmacists to be actively involved in their communities and to become pioneers in ensuring that the best contact and knowledge is provided to the consumer. Consumers should also be aware, on the other hand, that neighborhood pharmacists can be their primary source of health care information and should be secure enough to contact them for any information.

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