

Direct-to-Consumer Advertising (DTCA)

Approved by the CMA Board of Directors, September 2002

Canadians have a right to information about prescription drugs and other therapeutic interventions, to enable them to make informed decisions about their own health. This information must be evidence based and provide details about side effects and health risks as well as benefits.

Brand-specific direct-to-consumer advertisements, such as those permitted in the United States, do not provide optimal information on prescription drugs. We are concerned that DTCA:

- is not information but marketing, and sends the message that a prescription drug is a “consumer good” rather than a health care benefit.
- may not provide enough information to allow the consumer to make appropriate drug choices. For example, it generally does not provide information about other products or therapies that could be used to treat the same condition. In addition, it may stimulate demand by exaggerating the risks of a disease and generating unnecessary fear.
- may strain the relationship between

patients and providers, for example if a patient’s request for an advertised prescription drug is refused.

- drives up the cost of health care, and undermines the efforts of physicians, pharmacists and others to promote optimal drug therapy.

Patient groups, health care providers, governments and pharmaceutical manufacturers should be supported in activities to develop objective, reliable plain-language information about prescription drugs to ensure that Canadians are able to make informed health care decisions.

Therefore we:

- Support the provision of objective, evidence-based, reliable plain-language information for the public about prescription drugs.
- Oppose direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising in Canada.