



HEALTH AWARENESS

Information To Help You Make Health Care Decisions

(NAPSA)—Armed with good information, you can be your own best advocate when it comes to making health care decisions. That means not only gathering information on specific medical conditions and the latest treatments, but asking questions and seeking advice during your doctor visits.

But where can consumers get reliable and accurate health care information? In many cases, it's from prescription drug advertisements. Studies show that direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising starts important conversations about overall health and disease between doctors and patients—conversations that may lead to new diagnoses and better treatment.

According to a Harvard University/Massachusetts General Hospital and Harris Interactive health care survey, for example, one-quarter of adult patients who consulted a doctor after seeing a DTC ad received a new diagnosis. Some of the most common new diagnoses included high cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes and depression. These conditions are often undertreated and underdiagnosed in the general population.

“Direct-to-Consumer advertising plays an invaluable role informing physicians and patients both about disease and new and lifesaving medicines,” says Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) Senior Vice President Ken Johnson. “Educational advertising empowers patients to seek guidance from their doctors, which can lead to earlier detection and treatment of diseases.”

Guiding Principles

PhRMA recently issued new guiding principles to further improve the educational value of prescription drug advertising. Through



Advertisements are often how consumers first find out about new drugs, which encourages them to speak with their doctors.

these principles, pharmaceutical companies pledge to provide even more accurate information to patients and doctors about health and disease they can use. Key elements include:

- Companies should submit all new DTC television advertisements to the Food and Drug Administration before releasing them for broadcast.
- DTC television advertising that identifies a product by name should clearly state the health conditions for which the medicine is approved, as well as the risks associated with the medicine being advertised.
- Companies should spend an appropriate amount of time educating health care professionals about new medicines or new therapeutic indications before beginning the first direct-to-consumer advertising campaign.

PhRMA represents the country's leading pharmaceutical research and biotechnology companies, which are devoted to inventing medicines that allow patients to live longer, healthier and more productive lives. To learn more, visit the Web site at www.phrma.org.