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PAAB Launches New Initiatives for 2007

The Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board (PAAB) kicked off the new year with several important initiatives of interest to professionals in pharmaceutical marketing. These activities include:

- an ongoing process to get industry feedback on its operations,
- a special half-day industry information event to explain the July 1, 2007 revised Code implementation in April 2007,
- a new Code education program in November 2007 and
- the transition of the PAAB submission review process to more effectively incorporate electronic submissions.

The PAAB Commissioner Ray Chepesiuk was keen to talk about the approach the PAAB team has adopted to continuously improve the quality of its service and to support the industry in its efforts to embody the highest ethical standards.

“We are studying the results of a comprehensive industry survey we completed recently,” said Chepesiuk. “The online survey was sent to > 1200 individuals, industry associations and stakeholders that are involved in pharmaceutical marketing. It is part of a larger feedback process which we are committed to that will include regular quarterly mini-surveys.”

The survey included 24 questions of a demographic, qualitative and quantitative nature. Many questions provided the recipient an opportunity to share experiences or suggestions. The last time the PAAB undertook such an industry-wide poll was in 1992.

“The information survey respondents provided will give us a more accurate picture about our customers and their perceptions of our level and quality of service as well as gain their insights on how we can get better at what we do,” said Chepesiuk.

The industry seems generally supportive of the effort.

“It is not often that a regulatory body asks their ‘customers’ how they are doing,” says Paul Hickey, President of BrandHealth and current President of the Association of Medical Advertising Agencies. “The PAAB has demonstrated, particularly in recent years, an extraordinary commitment to customer service; something that is relatively rare among regulatory bodies.”

“In a business environment as competitive as pharmaceuticals, there will always be rulings and decisions that don’t go the way we or our clients desire, but that’s what makes this industry interesting. The more you learn about other organizations



Mark Gregory,
Vice-President,
Chyma

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around the world that have similar mandates to the PAAB, the more you realize how well respected and admired it is. At the heart of this is the PAAB's commitment to improving the way it delivers on its core mandate. I am sure that they will use the feedback received to continue along that path," added Hickey.

"While they are very accessible and approachable, the PAAB Commissioner and Reviewers have their perspective on things and sometimes the industry has another. This survey is a demonstration that the PAAB is interested in improving the quality of communication between its reviewers and pharmaceutical marketers and is willing to adapt to improve that interaction," says Patrick McGovern, Vice-President of Blade Creative Branding Inc. and Communications Director for the Ontario Pharmaceutical Marketing Association (OPMA).

The PAAB has also made a number of changes to its Code of Advertising

- accountability and
- exemptions from PAAB review.

The Commissioner emphasized the importance of client relationships and knowledge sharing. "We want to communicate those changes to the PAAB clients to facilitate the transition into applying the new code requirements. The prescribing information format has been revised for the first time in 30 years. So that may be a major implementation challenge for advertisers and publishers."

"In 2007, we will implement changes to make electronic submission of documents easier. This is designed to increase efficiency related to the file turn-around time," said Chepesiuk. "To get the word out to pharmaceutical marketers about the new Code amendments and procedures, we have organized special half-day Industry Information Seminars in Toronto on April 11, 2007 and in Montreal on April 12, 2007. As well, we want to talk about the differences between CME activities and advertising activities

and when the two may cross over. We have had concern expressed by academic educators that some types of so-called CME activities are really advertising. That would be of concern to Health Canada as well, especially in the area of promotion of off-label information."

The PAAB Industry Information events in April are free. Check their website or www.pharmahorizons.com for more information. Participants must pre-register to attend the events.

The PAAB has also announced that it plans to overhaul its Code Education Program.

"Our Code Education Program has had a great three-year run. Now it is time to build on the behaviour change the program helped to foster and to shift gears, with redefined learning objectives and a new curriculum," said Ray Chepesiuk. "The 2007 Code Education Workshops will debut on November 14 in Montreal and on November 21 in Toronto. The full-day workshops will focus on

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Acceptance that will come into force July 1, 2007, as well as to the process of how the clients submit materials to the PAAB for review. Some of the key areas of the Code that have been revised touch upon:

- fair balance,
- prescribing information,

strategies, tips and techniques to speed approval of submissions. I want to take the opportunity to thank the manufacturers, agencies and publishers for their strong support of the PAAB during my tenure as Commissioner.”

The industry’s support for the PAAB’s recent announcements is nicely captured by Greg Buie, the President of the influential Pharmaceutical Marketing Club of Quebec (PMCQ).

“I believe it is in the best interest of patients, health-care practitioners and indeed our industry that pharmaceutical regulatory bodies, organizations and associations maintain a constant dialogue based on information sharing and perhaps even more importantly, education. Groups such as the PAAB, the PMCQ and the OPMA have demonstrated a consistent commitment to the betterment of our industry and its members,” says Buie.

“The recent PAAB electronic survey of its members, as well as its regular education sessions, are a testament to this commitment of such an important and influential member of our community. Both early and more recently in my pharmaceutical career, I personally have participated in educational events from both the PAAB and the PMCQ. Regardless of my level of experience at the time, I benefited greatly on every occasion.”

Montreal-based Pharmahorizons Inc. has worked with the PAAB since 2003 as its training partner.

“Based on the success we have had to date and the positive evaluations we received from hundreds of pharmaceutical marketers, we were happy to ask Pharmahorizons to continue to develop, to market and to deliver our education program,” said Chepesiuk.

Pharmahorizons is well recognized for the quality of its industry training, both face-to-face and E-learning. With > 20 industry educational programs, they are training partners of the Council for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education (CCPE) and Rx&D.

“The PAAB Code Education Program is very popular,” says Sophie Vadeboncoeur, the Operations Director at Pharmahorizons. “If you need further information, please call toll-free, (877) 751-9415.”

“Seats at the courses in November 2007 will go fast, so I encourage people to register early online at www.pharmahorizons.com to avoid disappointment.” **CPM**

Mark Gregory is the Vice-President of Chyma, a new online community used by > 13,000 Canadian physicians to share information, trade shifts and strengthen relationships.

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