



The Pharmaceutical
Advertising Advisory Board
REVIEW
By Ray Chepesiuk, Commissioner

Drug Marketing: Good Public Policy or Good Politics?

The political environment involving the marketing of prescription drugs in Canada has heated up this fall. I am writing this in early September and by the time you read it, several events will have taken place that may have some impact on the future of your jobs as prescription drugs marketers.

First of all, there will be public consultations held by Health Canada officials to receive input on the Legislative Renewal Project. The project is aimed at creating a new framework for protecting the health of Canadians. There are sections within the project about the marketing of drugs, and specifically about the promotion of prescription drugs to health professionals and the general public. Of most concern is the section on preclearance review of advertising. There exists a notion that Health Canada can do the reviews. If given the opportunity to present, the PAAB will support the current self-regulation system, which includes preclearance review for prescription drug advertising.

Government hearings on prescription drugs

This fall, there are also countrywide hearings taking place with respect to prescription drugs being held by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. The committee is made up of Members of Parliament. They are discussing topics, such as marketing to, and lobbying of, prescribers and dispensers; direct-to-consumer advertising; rising cost; misuse and abuse; and addiction within the general

population. This is a politically charged process and the outcome is uncertain. Once again, if given the opportunity to present in this case, the PAAB will support the current self-regulation system.

PAAB and Health Canada discuss mutual interests

The PAAB has been given the opportunity to meet with senior Health Canada officials this fall to discuss agenda items of mutual interest. The date and agenda have not been finalized. We are hoping to discuss current relationship issues with Health Canada and the future role of our preclearance review mechanisms in a self-regulation of drug advertising system.

The R_x&D Board of Directors has been reviewing a proposal to modify the R_x&D Code of Marketing Practices. The board is hoping to create a document that provides guidance to their members in a broader sense, while at the same time close the perceived loopholes some companies have taken advantage of. It is unfortunate that ethical codes and guidelines have to be adjusted because some people examine the letter of them to find weaknesses in their application. Perhaps larger penalties for indiscretion is called for. I would recommend that senior company officials take a good, hard, ethical look at their marketing practices and make a conscious decision to act in a manner that is seen by the public as appropriate. If the collective marketing practices have been seen by the public as appropriate, we wouldn't have any



need for the current formal government-driven reviews of those practices.

At the November general meeting, I will be requesting that the PAAB Directors strike a Code Committee to undergo a thorough review of the PAAB Code of Advertising Acceptance in attempt to modernize the scope and detail of the Code.

PAAB training

The PAAB will conduct a new professional development initiative aimed at increasing the under-

standing of PAAB's Code of Advertising Acceptance. The goal of the training program is to teach the application of the PAAB Code to new pharmaceutical industry employees and suppliers and refresh the knowledge of seasoned professionals. The new in-depth training program will include at least three elements: workshop pre-work, face-to-face PAAB training workshops, and Internet e-learning resources. Registration will be open to anybody having an interest in the regulation of pharmaceutical advertising.

The first workshop series will take place January 27 in Montreal and January 29 in Toronto. The workshops will be full-day events. Attendance will be limited. Participants are encouraged to register early. Pharmahorizons is providing administrative support for the program.

Pharmaceutical marketers interested in receiving more information on the training program or who wish to register may contact Mark Gregory, Vice-President, Pharmahorizons at 1-866-472-4948, or via e-mail at mark@pharmahorizons.com. **CPM**

R_x & D Code of
Marketing Practices:

www.canadapharma.org

