



Singapore
Medical
Association

22 Nov 2020

Dear Colleagues

ADVERTISING STANDARDS FOR DOCTORS

Further to the letter from MOH to all medical and dental practitioners dated 21 Nov 2020 (ref: MOH Circular No. 221/2020), and recent events regarding doctors' details being put on a web-page for general readership, we would like to remind all doctors that even though advertising is allowed in Singapore, it should meet certain standards. This applies whether a doctor does so directly, or through a proxy that he or she authorises or associates with. We have reproduced the relevant section of the [SMC Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines](#) below, and taken the liberty of highlighting some aspects that some doctors may overlook.

Section G - Advertising

G1. General principles

You can validly provide information about the services you provide to both colleagues and members of the public to help them make informed healthcare choices. The information provided must be of a high standard. This means:

- (1) The information you provide must not mislead or through excessive persuasion unduly induce the public to seek healthcare services which they may not need.
- (2) You must not in medical advertising exploit patients' vulnerabilities, fears or lack of knowledge.
- (3) The nature of your advertising must be appropriate to the honour and dignity of the medical profession and contain nothing that brings the profession into disrepute.

G2. Standards required of advertising information

The standards of medical advertising must be high to maintain the public's trust in and respect of the profession. Upholding these standards means:

- (1) Medical advertising and the provision of information in the public domain must meet the following standards:
 - (a) Factual.
 - (b) Accurate.
 - (c) Verifiable.
 - (d) Not misleading.
 - (e) Not unduly persuasive.

- (f) No extravagant claims.
 - (g) Not sensational.
 - (h) Not enticing or alluring.
 - (i) No financial inducements.
 - (j) Not laudatory.
 - (k) Not comparative.
 - (l) Not disparaging.
- (2) You may advertise by providing neutrally toned and objective information about your SMC-registered qualifications, experience, areas of practice and your expertise in procedures. You must not include information that could mislead the public as to your registered qualifications, experience or expertise.
- (3) You must not use “before” and “after”, or even only “after” images or information for medical advertising in the public domain as anecdotal cases create unjustified expectations of the results of treatment, which may vary.
- (4) Advertising must not seek to unduly persuade beyond logic and reason through arousing intense curiosity or interest, or stimulating strong emotional reactions that may impair rational decision making about whether to seek healthcare services.
- (5) Advertising must not seek to induce ill-founded fear or insecurity about health or longevity, nor play on the public’s sense of self-esteem or generate overly critical perceptions or dissatisfaction with self, body image or physical attractiveness. You must not advertise using elements of glitz, glamour, style, famous locations, associations with celebrities and the entertainment or fashion world.
- (6) You must not offer financial inducements such as free or discounted examinations or treatments (outside of legitimate non-commercial health promotion activities). You must not lure patients through time-limited special offers, tie-ups with unrelated commercial entities (such as credit cards) or offering gifts or other material incentives, to persuade them to take up your services. You must not offer medical services and products as prizes or gifts in any context.
- (7) Testimonials are subjective and must not be used in advertising on any media where you have any control over the content about yourself. You must not ask or induce your patients or anyone to write positive testimonials about you in any media.
- (8) You must not disparage other doctors or their practices in your advertising and you must not give any impression that you and your practice are superior in any way compared to other doctors who provide similar services.
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