



Press release
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Industry body calls on government to enforce marketing ethics for healthcare products

Marketing Code Authority submission highlights the need for independence of healthcare practitioners in prescribing and dispensing of health products.

Johannesburg – 05 April 2018 - In a recent submission to government, the Marketing Code Authority (MCA) has called for regulations to promote ethical and legitimate marketing activities for health products. The MCA is a self-regulating body, with voluntary membership drawn from manufacturers of medicines, medical devices and IVDs, focusing on the ethical marketing of healthcare products.

The appeal was made in response to an invitation to comment on the proposed regulations relating to bonusing and other financial incentives falling under Section 18(A), which have long been awaited by industry players.

“We are delighted that proposed draft regulations for S18A have been published for comment and see this as the ideal opportunity to call on government to support similar regulations for the ethical marketing of health products,” said Wayne McDuling, Chairperson of the MCA. Section 18C of the Medicines and Related Substances Amendment Act makes provision for regulations to control promotional activities, but these have not yet been put in place.

“Society has increasingly high expectations of the healthcare industry which go beyond just legal compliance. Thus, over the past six years, a significant number of key industry suppliers of healthcare products have worked to develop and implement the MCA self-regulatory code. Through their membership, these suppliers have committed to ensuring their products are marketed to healthcare practitioners, patients and consumers in an ethical manner,” continued McDuling.

Under the current legislative framework sanctions imposed on MCA members are not enforceable and not all industry suppliers are members of the MCA, resulting in inconsistency across the supply chain.

“We need government to enforce an ethical marketing code with requisite authority and to structure guidelines for the development of acceptable standards for marketing codes. This needs to be enhanced by a mechanism to require sign-up by manufacturers or suppliers, such as making membership a condition of a manufacturing or medicine supply licence,” added McDuling.

“The importance of promoting the independence of healthcare practitioners in their prescribing or dispensing of healthcare products for patients, cannot be over-emphasised. It is our opinion that the intents of S18A (bonusing and other incentive schemes) and S18C (ethical marketing) are not mutually exclusive. The continuing potential for unethical marketing of healthcare products to HCPs, patients and consumers, will impact directly on the quality of care received by the patient, who should be the primary focus of our marketing efforts,” concluded McDuling.

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