



Australian Prescriber



AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW

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Pharmaceutical advertising in clinical software - commerce in your consultation

The information revolution will impact on the way doctors prescribe, leading to potential repercussions for the community at large. Two of the three largest prescribing software suppliers now allow pharmaceutical companies to advertise on screen. This means that doctors and patients may be exposed to adverts during the consultation.

Doctors have been exposed to pharmaceutical advertising for years through professional journals and newspapers, as well as to direct marketing by pharmaceutical representatives. While advertising serves to inform prescribers about new products, it is also there to promote the sale of drugs.

The most important issue when it comes to advertising is the degree to which it will influence the prescribing decisions of the doctor. The concern with computer based advertising is that it is so much closer to the act of prescribing that it may be more influential.

The Australian Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association has a code of conduct for drug advertising, that includes advertising within computer software. Dr Andrew Nolan, writing in the latest edition of *Australian Prescriber*, suggests that the industry could have set stricter controls on this type of advertising.

Dr Nolan also raises the issue of competition. While pharmaceutical advertising has supported the availability of high quality software at lower prices, it may hinder competition amongst software developers, with smaller companies unable to attract big advertising contracts.

For a copy of the complete article or information about Australian Prescriber, visit the homepage <http://www.australianprescriber.com> or contact 02 6289 7038 (ph); 02 6289 8641 (fax).

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Further information

Australian Prescriber is a national independent review of therapeutic topics, designed to assist health professionals in their duties. The journal provides independent comment - no advertising is accepted.

The current issue of *Australian Prescriber* also looks at the use of paracetamol for childhood fever, and at the treatment of head lice.