



Study Shows **MARKETING INSPIRES DOCTORS TO WEIGH BENEFITS, RISKS** of Drugs Prescribed



Dr. Stefan Stremersch
Marketing can spur doctors and patients to have more informative conversations about the benefits and side effects of drugs, says Dr. Stefan Stremersch of Duke University.

Marketing pharmaceuticals directly to doctors or patients is often perceived as adversely affecting public health by emphasizing potential benefits and downplaying potential risks of drugs.

But new research shows that pharmaceutical marketing actually encourages physicians to base their dispensing of samples and prescriptions on a drug's scientifically proven safety and effectiveness.

According to The Debate of Influencing Doctors' Decisions: Are Drug Characteristics the Missing Link?, patient requests and pharma marketing efforts such as detailing and symposia do affect physician decision making differentially across brands, but the responsiveness of physicians' decision making to marketing efforts and patient requests is heavily influenced by a drug's effectiveness and side-effects profile.

The authors of the report say it may have important implications for policymakers and authorities exploring the way marketing affects drug dispensation.

"Drug marketing has been portrayed like some scary movie where pharmaceutical firms are shoving drugs in our veins for the sake of profits, but that doesn't gibe with our results," says Stefan Stremersch, Ph.D., a visiting professor of marketing at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and chaired professor of marketing at Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Netherlands. "Marketing can actually spur doctors and patients — and doctors and drug reps — to have more informative conversations about the benefits and side effects of drugs. Marketing isn't about buying off physicians."

According to the study, coauthored by Dr. Stremersch and Sriram Venkataraman, Ph.D., assistant professor of marketing at the Goizueta Business School at Emory University, doctors are more likely to respond favorably to marketing for a drug that's proven more effective than others in its class, while excessive marketing of a less-effective drug can actually reduce the likelihood that the doctor will prescribe or dispense samples of the drug.

Interestingly, marketing efforts for drugs with a higher number of side effects were found to have a positive effect on prescriptions written and samples dispensed. The study suggests this could be because information provided during the detailing call helped clarify the physician's questions about the drug's side effect profile.

"There is evidence that physicians rely on science while prescribing," Dr. Venkataraman says. "If a drug has many side effects, it's best to have a sales rep explain those side effects directly to a doctor rather than bypassing medical professionals with ads aimed at patients."

The study also notes that when patients ask their doctors for a more effective drug, or one with fewer side effects, the physician is more likely to accommodate the request.

The rise of direct-to-consumer advertising in recent years has resulted in more patients requesting specific medications from their doctors, prompting regulators to keep a closer watch on both physician- and patient-directed marketing efforts.

Sales Practices **DISTINGUISH TOP PHARMA REPS**

Regardless of whether pharmaceutical companies are growing or shrinking their salesforces, the fundamentals of selling remain constant: planning, targeting, relationship management, and goal-setting.

But it is the specific practices that representatives follow within these areas that separate the top performers from the pack, according to Best Practices in Pharmaceutical Sales, a report from business intelligence firm Best Practices.

BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE REP EFFECTIVENESS

- Continuously probe physician's office culture, policies, and preferences to create a customized sales approach.
- Build rapport with physicians by openly discussing goals, office service needs, and physicians' needs.
- Manage and allocate samples to physicians according to prescription volume and by coaching doctors on the use of samples.
- Create relationship-building programs to meet specific customer needs and preferences.
- Manage sales reps by developing measurable goals, budgeting sufficient resources, and providing continuous coaching.
- Empower reps to align planning, targeting, and scheduling activities to reflect their personal selling approaches.

Marketing efforts for drugs with a higher number of side effects have a positive effect on prescriptions written.

Best practices in planning and targeting and conducting office calls, as well as management of relationships, samples, programs, and salesforces are explored. These include the use of automated formulary data and thought-leader information to develop sales messages that anticipate formulary restrictions and opportunities, and the integration of activity triggers into annual planning calendars to prepare sample staples and sales messages in advance of key illness periods, such as cold and flu or allergy seasons.

According to the report, best practitioner reps estimate that it takes at least one to two years in any new territory to develop relationships with local doctors and office staff. Reps can accelerate this transition and increase personal productivity by leveraging the work of their predecessors.

Key relationship-building techniques cited in the report include:

- Having the departing rep send out thank-you notes that introduce the new rep to the doctor, providing a sense of continuity and demonstrating the previous rep's respect for the physician.
- Having the departing rep personally introduce the new rep to the doctor, helping to eliminate the awkwardness of the new rep's first solo calls.
- Learning doctors' hot buttons and interests through face-to-face meet-

It takes at least one to two years in any new territory for sales reps to develop relationships with local doctors.

ings with the predecessor rep, giving the incoming rep a considerable head start in building relationships with physicians in the new territory.

The report also discusses ways to reclaim neglected territories through techniques specifically designed to regain doctors' trust. Suggested practices to achieve this goal include:

- Beginning the relationship with a brief apology and a conciliatory attitude toward doctors in the affected territory.
- Building continuity through a consistent route plan that ensures the doctors in the previously neglected territory are visited at regular intervals.
- Fostering goodwill through a temporary increase in the number of samples provided to physicians in the affected territory.

EXPERT, PEERS ARE PATIENTS' MOST TRUSTED SOURCES

for Healthcare Decision-Making



Alfred O'Neill
Patients are more alike than dissimilar in their healthcare decision making process, says Alfred O'Neill, Senior VP of Ryan TrueHealth.

A recent study shows that when making healthcare decisions, patients turn to healthcare professionals and their families and friends for information and advice, and they value personalized communications over more generalized treatment information.

Patient Power, a study fielded by Ryan TrueHealth in partnership with ICOM, gives marketers insight into the key elements that influence the patient's decision-making process.

The online study surveyed more than 25,000 patients with at least one chronic health condition as to how and why they make healthcare choices.

Key findings of the study include:

- Despite differences in chronic conditions, patients refer to the same trusted information sources when making healthcare decisions.
- While healthcare professionals and experts are still the most trusted sources, peers, spouses, and friends are the second-most trusted source for healthcare decision-making.
- Advocates play a highly influential role in motivating other patients because they are natural information gatherers and disseminate what they learn.
- Authentic communications with patients helps marketers meet patients' needs for trust while they look for authenticity.
- Spiritual beliefs are an important source in patient decision making.
- Patients want information that is personalized. Marketers who deliver the right information to

SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

1. Money matters so understand how incentives can address compliance.
2. Use the power of experts and add a human touch, investing in some form of call center, live nurse, or call-in line.
3. Identify patients' circles of influence, encompassing their psychographic and lifestyle profile, medical conditions, treatment, and approach to working with providers to make healthcare choices.
4. Implement a "patient attraction and engagement strategy," using survey information to hone messages.
5. Create a compliance connection by communicating with patients on an emotional level to build trust.
6. Create tools that encourage and empower, ensuring patients have the tools to make informed decisions about the risks and benefits of medications.
7. Identify measurable responses and accurately track ROI through specific actions that can be measured and adjusted based on results.

Brands should tailor customer relationship management programs by patient stage and patient influencer.

the right customer at the right time create opportunities for ongoing communications.

The study seeks to challenge the one-dimensional nature of most pharma and biotech patient marketing, which tends to focus on product features and benefits while

ignoring the end result that the treatment can deliver.

"The results reveal that patients are more alike than dissimilar in their healthcare decision making process," says Alfred O'Neill, senior VP of Ryan TrueHealth. "From patients with high blood pressure to those suffering daily with rheumatoid arthritis, the human condition trumps the disease condition."

On Ryan TrueHealth's Web blog, Mr. O'Neill says the study shows that brands should be focusing more budget and effort on developing electronic customer-relationship management programs tailored by patient stage and patient influencer, what the company calls electronic patient medical education (e-PRM).

"Companies should use these expert and peer influencers to communicate what patients really need to know, versus pushing what brands think they should know, to create more informed and empowered patients," he says.

Engaging patients with pharmaceutical products means marketers must provide both personal perspectives and valued, accurate information from professional sources. Importantly, patients want information that is clear and jargon-free.

Connected Physicians Using SOCIAL MEDIA

One-third of online physicians use blogs, professional networks, forums, and message boards to connect with other physicians or content they have created monthly, according to JupiterResearch's report Direct-to-Physician Online Marketing: Benchmarking and Leveraging Physicians' Adoption of Social Media.

These "connected physicians" are intense consumers of media compared with unconnected online physicians.

According to the report, 63% of connected physicians participated in various pharma-sponsored marketing programs monthly, including online detailing, versus 53% of unconnected online physicians. Connected physicians were also more likely to use branded Websites and manufacturers' Websites than were their counterparts.

Further, two-thirds of connected physicians forwarded useful content to colleagues, while 58% recommended specific sites to patients.

Follow up

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