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Ad Alert

The Copy Advice team

Email: Submit a query directly to the team through the [online form](#).

Committee of Advertising Practice
Castle House, 37-45 Paul Street
London EC2A 4LS
Telephone 020 7492 2200
Textphone 020 7242 8159
Email enquiries@cap.org.uk
www.cap.org.uk

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ADVERTISING OF BOTOX AND OTHER PRESCRIPTION-ONLY MEDICINES

Action: Botox and other prescription-only medicines (POMs) should not be advertised to the public. Please consult Copy Advice before accepting ads for what you suspect might be prescription-only medicines

This is An update of an Ad Alert first published in 2007 and last updated in August 2022.

The CAP Compliance team remains concerned by the continued appearance of ads that offer, refer to or allude to prescription-only medicines (POMs). Many of the problems still refer to Botox (or other brands of botulinum toxin type A injection) but you should also look out for the following: Viagra*, Cialis, Finasteride, Minoxidil (prescription-strength; >5%), Sildenafil, Dysport, Vistabel, Propecia, Xenical, Lignocaine, Lidocaine, Saxenda, Methadone, Avodart, Acomplia, Levitra, Hydroxocobalamin, Semaglutide, Liraglutide and Kenalog (triamcinolone acetonide).

Rule 12.12 of the CAP Code states: “prescription-only medicines or prescription-only medical treatments may not be advertised to the public”.

There are four sectors most commonly associated with the problematic advertising of POMs: cosmetic treatments (injectables), hair replacement programmes, impotence or erectile dysfunction products and, more recently, weight loss treatments. It is not always obvious from an ad whether a product is a medicine or whether a treatment programme involves the use of a POM, but trademarked or copyrighted names often give a clue that a medicine is being used.

***Note** – this Alert does not apply to “Viagra Connect”, which was re-classified from a prescription-only medicine (POM) to a pharmacy medicine (P) in November 2017. Other Viagra products, and “Viagra” generally, remain POMs and covered by this Alert.

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Chair James Best CBE Director of the Committee Shahriar Coupal
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Committee of Advertising Practice Limited, registered in England No 08310744, Castle House, 37-45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS

We would be grateful for your cooperation to ensure that ads for POMs are not placed.

Please consult the CAP Copy Advice team if you are unsure about ads or the Code's requirements