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Ad Alert

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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 a reissue of an Ad Alert first published in 2007 and last updated in March 2019.

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 and Liraglutide.

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, often referred to in shorthand as "skinny jabs". 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.

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.