

HAIAP - Pharmaceutical Promotion Action Research Project 2021

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(Results of studies from a range of countries could be compiled and published)

Why: Promotion claims for medicines that cannot be substantiated are common and cause harm. Regulation is weak and poorly enforced. There is a need to bring this situation to the attention of consumers, health professionals, the media, and the government.

How: Experienced members of HAIAP will provide health sciences students with experience and assistance in critically assessing medicines advertising claims against scientific evidence, working up complaints to regulators, and publicising the findings.

Methodology:

1. Find and document the promotion of a medicine (or supplement) with dubious claims:
 - 1.1. Take a screenshot of the product pack &/or website page(s) containing the suspect claim(s), date it, and add it to your report.
 - 1.2. Identify who is responsible for the advertisement; if a website's provenance is not apparent, try WHO IS.¹ The advertiser must be based in your country to be within the jurisdiction of your regulator.
 - 1.3. Identify the therapeutic product advertised and the suspect claim(s) and add it to your report, e.g., "Swisse High Strength Vitamin C 1000 mg "helps reduce the duration and severity of cold symptoms."
 - 1.4. Check if your medicines regulator has registered the product and the claims match the approved indications of the medicine. Add results to your report.
2. Check your selection is suitable by emailing it to HAIAP via ken.harvey@medreach.com.au.
3. Search for evidence that supports or refutes the claim:
 - 3.1. Try ISRCTN registry,² Medline³, Cochrane,⁴ etc.
 - 3.2. If necessary, contact the sponsor &/or manufacture and ask if they have any relevant studies
 - 3.3. Summarise the evidence and add it to your report.
4. Does the evidence support the claim(s)?
 - 4.1. Add your conclusion to your report.
5. Are the claim(s) in breach of local (or international⁵) advertising codes?
 - 5.1. Add your conclusion to your report.
6. Send your report to HAIAP (via ken.harvey@medreach.com.au) to check and discuss the possibility of submitting a complaint and publicity via HAIAP News, short videos, etc.

Examples (Monash University students)

- <http://www.medreach.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WAM-Fish-oil.mp4>
- www.medreach.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/WAM-Weight-loss.mp4

Resource

[Pharmaceutical Marketing - Health Action International \(haiweb.org\)](http://www.haiweb.org/)

¹ [ICANN Lookup](http://www.icann.org/)

² [ISRCTN Registry](http://www.isrctn.com/)

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>

⁴ <http://www.cochranelibrary.com/>

⁵ [IFPMA Code of Practice \(2019\) - IFPMA](http://www.ifpma.org/)