



Promotional Products' Role
in Patient and Physician
Education

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PhRMA Code Overview

On July 10, 2008, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) announced a modification to the PhRMA code on interactions with healthcare professionals.

Under the new terms of this voluntary code, which took effect January 2009, PhRMA proposes that all non-educational products including practice-related items of minimal value such as pens, notepads, mugs and similar reminder items should not be offered to healthcare professionals or members of their staff, even if they are accompanied by patient or physician educational materials.

However, PhRMA will continue to support the distribution of items designed primarily for the education of patients or healthcare professionals if they are not of substantial value (\$100 or less) and do not have value to the healthcare professional outside of his or her professional responsibilities.

Clarifying The Code

- This code is not a law or bill put forth by any legislative body.
- It is not a crime for pharmaceutical manufacturers and researchers to distribute promotional products to physicians.
- Compliance with this code is voluntary; there are no penalties for non-compliance.
- Company adherence to the code is expected to be fostered by the scrutiny of the press and market competitors.
- This code relies on the industry to police itself.

The modified code applies to member companies of PhRMA, physicians and healthcare professionals. When reviewing the code, please note the following programs are still allowed.

- Internal programs
- Marketing to consumers
- Marketing to hospitals
- Distribution of products to hospitals

In an effort to find new ways to support our members in their sales and marketing efforts to this industry, the Association recently worked with PPAI members, physicians specializing in different areas of medicine and marketing professionals to create an approach to working within the parameters of the modified PhRMA code.

What follows are initial observations and recommendations as we continue to market to the medical community.



A New Approach

Promotional products have served as important tools within the medical community for several decades. Pharmaceutical companies have employed promotional products to advertise their new drugs, to ensure that physicians are aware of available medications, and to help educate patients on prescriptions.

For many years our industry used items such as ballpoint pens and mugs in our interaction with physicians and other medical professionals. Using such tools of our trade became a standard practice.

Now that this practice has come into question and new guidelines have been issued, we as an industry must evolve and change. We as advertising and marketing experts must recognize now is time for a new approach.

As it will become increasingly more difficult to offer standard logoed items such as mugs and pens to physicians, we must work with pharmaceutical companies to become better counselors, consultants and educators. Physicians maintain a serious, ongoing need for better tools to educate their patients and educate themselves.

This is our opportunity to demonstrate how promotional products can help the pharmaceutical community do a better job of understanding physicians' wants and needs.

To do this we need to develop stronger ties with physicians and other medical professionals. As professional marketers, how many of us have established successful relationships with physicians to understand what they want and need?

How do we, as a community of marketing professionals, help pharmaceutical companies audit and survey physicians regarding their needs in order to provide solutions that will help them focus more on quality of care and patient education?

Are there opportunities to work with pharmaceutical companies on physician surveys, polls and other forums for feedback that will enable promotional consultants to create solutions for physicians and their practices?

In addition to working with physicians, what other avenues should we be looking at to maximize opportunities within the medical community?

One of the most frequent questions we all try to answer is what works and what doesn't?

For these questions, unfortunately, there are no simple answers. So we asked.



Education Is Key

In interviews with several physicians from a variety of specialties including pediatric primary care, dentistry, ophthalmology, cardiology and dermatology, the pervasive theme was a greater need for support. Physicians are dealing with increased pressures stemming from tighter budgets, higher insurance costs, smaller offices, reduced medical staffs and packed patient schedules. We need to always think – what can we do for physicians that will help support them and their practices. What small ways can we help relieve the pressure they are experiencing?

Physicians said, “It starts with information.”

New information supported by clear, high-quality data is imperative to build trust between physicians and pharmaceutical representatives. Physicians need credible and compelling information about new products and services if this information is to influence decision-direction for their patients. In order for promotional consultants to provide pharmaceutical representatives with the tools needed to offer that credible information, we must first understand that education is key.

Advertising at its core is about education. It is about sharing accurate and compelling information to help individuals make the best, most informed decisions. In our conversations with physicians, most stated they were frustrated by pharmaceutical companies applying hard sales techniques for pushing their newest drugs. They stated that since their time is limited, they would welcome any platforms where they could be taught more about the variety of options available and receive the most accurate information

about each option provided the information is communicated in an efficient and effective manner. To justify meeting with pharmaceutical representatives, physicians want them to add value to their day. Providing useful, relevant information and education is the best way to not only grab their attention, but also to stand out and earn their respect. In this environment, promotional consultants and pharmaceutical representatives need to be even smarter marketers and continuously demonstrate an expertise as it applies to physicians' specialties.

Because promotional products are held to a higher standard than print or television advertisements, we should assume that as we continue to work with pharmaceutical companies it will be essential that our promotions capture information such as drug composition, therapeutic indications, contra-indications, effects, side effects and warnings.

The new code essentially focuses on eliminating reminder advertising – advertising intended to further name recognition of a medicine or drug. As a result, it will be increasingly difficult for promotional consultants who today use promotional products such as mugs, ballpoint pens and notepads to continue leveraging these products with physicians. Promotional consultants, therefore, have two paths they can take as they continue to sell into the pharmaceutical community.

Path 1: Diversify

Since many promotional products have limited space with which to imprint a message, we should look to other types of promotional products and mediums for sharing this information.

Path 2: Business As Usual

Since the code is voluntary, potential opportunities to use promotional products such as ballpoint pens and notepads as tools for education can still be explored. While the new modifications are likely to make it more difficult to utilize these tools with physicians, the option is still available. We will highlight a few examples later in this paper.

Both options provide an avenue for the near and long term, but the more we adhere to the first path and apply products not limited by their physical real estate, the greater opportunity we have as an industry moving forward.

Diversifying

Since these new guidelines make it difficult to advertise on products that are limited by their size, physicians and PPAI anticipate pharmaceutical companies will incorporate more brochures, patient handouts, office posters and print or DVD presentations designed to clearly explain diseases, treatment options and management details.

Still, in our conversations with physicians, most believe there is a need that promotional products can meet that isn't being met today. Our queries revealed that physicians are looking for tools they can use at all points of care: at the initial consultation, during tests or lab work, when the patient is sent home and as part of ongoing follow-up.

In today's busy medical offices physicians often fail to communicate all that a patient needs or wants to know. Physicians we spoke with admitted to forgetting to share important details with patients, e.g. illness, virus, condition, diagnosis. They also admitted to oftentimes forgetting to share the name of the medication they were prescribing.

For promotional consultants that market branded handouts including practice profiles, medication pamphlets and rebate coupons, a 2004 study by Salu Inc. demonstrated that 80 percent of physicians reported not providing relevant handouts to patients during appointments. And according to a paper authored by IMS Health, the majority of physicians felt their responsibility ended once the prescription was written.

Additionally, Dr. Duane Cady, former president of the AMA Foundation has said that patients themselves forget most of what they are told within six minutes of leaving the physician's office.

And what happens when the patient returns home with the prescription?

Data demonstrates that up to 20 percent of the time the prescription is never filled or picked up and more than 30 percent of patients disregard the medication instructions they were provided.

As advertising specialists, there are several ways we can aid physicians in providing this ongoing care and education to their patients.

Business As Usual

When asked about their knowledge of the new PhRMA code being implemented in January 2009, none of the physicians interviewed were familiar with the new recommendations. When we shared information regarding the code, none believed the notion that offering physicians promotional products somehow impacted their drug-prescribing decisions.

Further, when asked if they had seen any changes in the amount or kinds of promotional products that were being given to their practice since PhRMA announced its intention to recommend this new code, none of the physicians who recently received promotional products could recall any changes. All physicians stated they are continuing to receive items that are not educational, which would suggest that pharmaceutical representatives are taking a business as usual approach. This further reinforces the fact that PhRMA's code is voluntary.

Physicians who have received promotional products on a consistent, or somewhat consistent, basis could not recall a time where the product provided was educational in nature or when the pharmaceutical representatives, who typically interact with the office staff, ever asked how they could provide tools that would assist the physician in providing better care and education to patients. While those asked agreed educational information would be beneficial to their practice, they also felt the role of patient education remained squarely in the lap of each practitioner and that the role of pharmaceutical companies and the promotional products industry is as a supplement to help keep physicians educated on the side effects, benefits and other details in order to provide the best ongoing care possible.



New Tools For Educating Patients And Physicians

Physicians are in a good position to educate their patients, but they need innovative new ways to ensure they are following up with patients, offering reminders and preventative tools. Pharmaceutical companies can also provide tools to educate physicians that will extend their knowledge and ultimately improve care for the patient.

What follows are a few examples and ideas we captured through our conversations with PPAI suppliers, distributors and multi-line representatives as well as physicians.

Educating The Patient

In one conversation, a dentist created a dental prevention game to help patients start a personalized prevention program for issues such as gum disease and cavities. The game was given to all patients during their first office visit and used at every appointment thereafter, serving as a constant reminder to patients and the physician. The dentist said the game has helped him educate while building strong, long-term relationships with his patients. He said that if a promotional products consultant could have created this game in tandem with a pharmaceutical company, it would have been a very beneficial tool for his dental practice and patients.

The dentist also said that he uses promotional products such as posters, billing inserts, postcards, counter cards and flyers to communicate with patients about new dental procedures, treatments and information about upcoming consultations.

Physicians also believe that items considered to be of nominal value by PhRMA can be adapted to serve as education tools for patients.

- For example, a pediatrician said notepads could be imprinted with the top five items a patient should know about a specific medication as a reminder to the physician and patient.
- An ophthalmologist stated a pen pre-loaded with scrolling directions on how to take a specific medication would be helpful to his practice.
- One primary care physician stated she could give patients mugs imprinted with human diagrams to show them how to perform specific self exams.

Educating The Physician

In a conversation we conducted with a dermatologist, the physician referred to a pre-recorded greeting card she received as a unique marketing tool that she had not seen until recently. She said it provided an innovative way for pharmaceutical representatives to reach a physician when in-person meetings weren't possible.

She stated that the pharmaceutical representative composed a message focused on a new psoriasis drug and its benefits and then sent talking greeting cards to everyone in her practice. She felt this use of promotional products to market a new drug was an innovative way to share important information, capture attention and help her remember both the pharmaceutical representative and the medication itself.

Because these messages can be pre-recorded and pre-approved by legal or regulatory departments this is one example of how the promotional products industry can leverage new mediums to help pharmaceutical representatives better educate physicians and their patients.

Physicians also noted that there was an opportunity for better education when pharmaceutical representatives visited them at their offices if they changed what information was provided. Because physicians receive information on new medications through pharmaceutical representatives who typically use flipcharts to demonstrate drug

benefits and show studies to validate their claims, why not also develop and use educational tools that highlight drug interactions and potential side effects when presenting to these individuals? Doctors stated that they do not typically receive such information when meeting with pharmaceutical representatives, but would benefit from the data.

Since promotional products have limited space to educate a physician, their medical staff or patients, physicians believe that a good use of promotional products is to help direct them to specific studies, research and other educational instruments. Why not bundle promotional products with items such as journal articles and scientific reference guides as a tool to keep physicians apprised of important developments? By using appropriate promotional items to reinforce information shared in a specific article, pharmaceutical representatives can educate physicians without having to become an expert on a specific topic.



Education Beyond The Exam Room

In addition to work that can be done to enhance communication, care and education inside the exam room, our conversations and research show that there may be opportunities within a variety of areas. Below we will touch on a few as food for further thought.

Medical Schools

Today physicians cite medical schools as a primary opportunity for the promotional products industry to help improve quality of care and impact patient education. Physicians interviewed feel medical schools should be teaching students to make prescribing decisions based on the best available evidence taking costs, risks, benefits and mechanisms of action into account. When briefed with background on the PhRMA code, physicians felt that pharmaceutical companies and promotional consultants should use the code as a platform to aid medical schools, encourage professors to change curricula and teach students about appropriate physician-industry relationships and potential conflicts.

In our conversations with physicians, the majority approved of interaction with pharmaceutical companies within medical schools. Physicians and students alike believe it isn't a conflict of interest to provide low cost promotional products. They also believe that it is appropriate to provide higher cost promotional products (e.g. text books) when the intent is to educate. Physicians saw no issue with receiving branded lecture notes with the logo of the pharmaceutical company if the pharmaceutical company picked up the costs for printing.

The primary view by physicians, professors and medical students is that the pharmaceutical industry enables physicians to provide better, more accurate treatment to patients in their care. All stated that interaction with drug companies does not color their decisions or prescription-prescribing behaviors. Pharmaceutical marketing does not impact a physician's ability to make unbiased decisions regarding prescribing medications.

In a discussion with a primary care doctor in Boston, the physician believed there was a need for pharmaceutical representatives to take more time to discuss the nuances of pharmaceutical marketing to provide a foundation for what professors and students should expect and how it could serve to extend their knowledge in the classroom and exam room.

We see a logical opportunity for the promotional products industry to work with pharmaceutical companies on initiatives that can be implemented within medical schools, dental schools and other health education institutions.

Pharmacies

Through our research and in our conversations with physicians, one item that continuously came up was how pharmaceutical representatives are working with pharmacies and pharmacists. In tune with a physician's role of discussing how to administer medication, the pharmacist also plays a pivotal role in patient education. How can we help pharmaceutical companies introduce programs to help pharmacies and pharmacists educate patients and reduce pharmacy errors when filling prescriptions?

With ongoing litigation surrounding many major drugs, how can we help pharmaceutical companies answer the following questions? When physicians prescribe medication, how can we help them answer patient questions such as, "What does this prescription treat, how will this prescription work with other medications and what are the warnings and potential side effects?"

When pharmacists provide completed prescriptions to patients, how can we help ensure the patient has been told the potential drug side effects, the bottle is labeled correctly, and the medication matches the medical name on the container label?

In one conversation with a pharmacist, the pharmacist saw an opportunity for pharmaceutical representatives and promotional consultants to leverage the PhRMA code. Today, pharmacists and pharmacy benefits managers suffer from a lack of information. Pharmacists would rather pharmaceutical companies spend less time visiting the pharmacy and more time providing them with relevant drug information in print or DVD formats. Pharmacists stated that they would prefer to receive a call from the pharmaceutical company stating that they would be mailing them details or dropping off DVD or print information rather than trying to schedule a meeting.

Another area where the promotional products industry and pharmaceutical companies can help educate patients is through work with online pharmacies such as Express Scripts. Because online pharmacies do not provide face-to-face interaction with the patient, there is a growing need for online pharmacies to do a better job educating patients. Since online pharmacies can only provide education in two ways—through a nurse on a customer service line and in the package that is received by the patient—the pharmaceutical companies and promotional consultants have a venue for educating patients beyond the traditional information packet sent in the box with the prescription.

Practice Awareness And Service Marketing

Beyond the obvious insights about how pharmaceutical companies can better serve physicians with educational information, there is also the question of how we as an industry provide general awareness for independent medical practices. For practices that are not affiliated with a large corporate hospital, it can be difficult to attract and retain patients.

We need to look at these practices and once again answer the question, “How can we help serve a want or need?”

Independent practices need support from pharmaceutical companies that helps them communicate why patients should elect to use their practice versus another physician's. We have to help them create the incentive for patients to put their health in their hands.

In a conversation we had with an imaging center that recently opened, the director of the center has been marketing to local physicians through face-to-face visits, e-mails and letters. How could a new center or any new medical practice leverage promotional products advertising to reach out to local physicians and generate new patients for their practice?

We have an opportunity as promotional consultants to help them to answer the following questions.

- What types of imaging do you offer?
- How is your imaging center different from other local centers?

How can we then take these answers and apply them in marketing campaigns to local physicians' offices?

- Create branded medical images or posters with an explanation as to what the images can teach you for posting in local physicians' offices



Methodology, Questions And Contacts

For this whitepaper 30 individuals were interviewed regarding their knowledge and recommendations around the PhRMA Code. Participants included PPAI suppliers, distributors and multi-line reps, members of the marketing, advertising and public relations community, as well as physicians from a variety of specialties.

PPAI members and members of the marketing, advertising and public relations community were asked approximately 15 questions about their observations, recommendations and concerns regarding the revised PhRMA code.

Physicians interviewed answered approximately 25 questions regarding issues related to patient education, use of promotional products within their offices, practices or hospitals, and how pharmaceutical companies and promotional consultants can work with doctors moving forward.

A list of the questions posed to both audiences as well as a sample list of physicians interviewed is highlighted below.

Questions Posed To PPAI Members And Members Of Marketing Community

- Please share your thoughts and examples of how promotional products can be used to educate.
- How familiar are you with the new PhRMA guidelines regarding the use of promotional products within a medical or healthcare setting?

- How much do you anticipate these new guidelines will affect your business?
- Are you abandoning this segment of the market (i.e. physicians/pharmaceuticals) as a result of the code?
- Have you changed how you are selling promotional products based on the guidelines?
- Are you marketing promotional products as a tool for education within healthcare or medicine today? If so, how?
- What types of products do you provide to the medical community? What products are most popular and why?
- What new ways can we use promotional products as a tool for education for the healthcare and medical community?
- Can you provide one or more scenarios where a medical practice is using a promotional product to educate its patients?
- Can you provide one or more examples where a medical practice is using a promotional product to educate its staff?
- Of the products you distribute/supply, which products are most often used for educational purposes either within or outside the medical industry? Please provide examples.
- In your interaction with pharmaceutical and medical device suppliers, do you know of specific companies that are aggressive in their marketing of promotional products for patient education?

- Beyond the PhRMA guidelines, what potential issues or legislation keep you up at night/could impact your business?
- Please share additional observations, opinions and potential solutions for this new challenge?

Questions Posed To Physicians

- What are the greatest challenges you face today in patient education?
- What tools do you use to educate patients?
- Do you feel these tools are effective?
- What other tools would you like to have for patient education?
- What do you think are the best tools for patient education?
- What tools do you use to help educate patients/administer care after they leave your office?
- What tools would you like to have to help educate patients/administer care after they leave your office?
- Are there any tools you refuse to use for patient education?
- Does it help to have tools for patient education that are free of charge?
- What free tools do you presently use for patient education?

- How well do they work? Please share some examples.
- What free tools would you like to have to help educate patients?
- Which of the following items do you find take the most time and/or are the most difficult to explain when educating patients?
 - Administering medication
 - Describing a medical procedure
 - Highlighting how the body or an organ functions
 - Demonstrating how a specific virus, condition or disease progresses
 - Other (please explain)
- Within your office or practice, what types of products are most often used for educational purposes (posters, brochures, video, DVDs, etc.?) Please provide examples.
- Are you aware of the new PhRMA guidelines regarding the use of promotional products within a medical or healthcare setting?
- Do you receive promotional products from pharmaceutical companies/medical equipment manufacturers and/or their sales representatives?
- Do pharmaceutical companies provide promotional products to your practice for the purpose of education (patient and/or staff)?
- Do you use promotional products as an educational tool within your practice? If so, how?
- How do you feel about pharmaceutical companies providing promotional products that serve as educational tools for your practice?

- Do you communicate with pharmaceutical/medical device representatives regarding the types of promotional products you would like for your practice?
- Do you feel the use of promotional products by pharmaceutical and medical equipment providers influences your drug purchasing or prescription writing decisions? If so, how?
- Provide one or more scenarios where you use a promotional product to educate your patients.
- Provide one or more scenarios where you use a promotional product to educate your medical or administrative staff.
- In your interaction with pharmaceutical and medical device suppliers, are there specific companies that are aggressive in their marketing of promotional products for patient education?

Sample Of Physicians Interviewed

- Dentist, Dallas, Texas
- Dermatologist, Henry Ford Medical Center, Detroit, Michigan
- Gastroenterologist, UCSF Medical Center, San Francisco, California
- Internist, Beth Israel Deaconess, Boston, Massachusetts
- Internist, Dallas, Texas
- Internist, New York, New York
- Neuro-Optometry, Plano, Texas
- Ophthalmologist, Tucson, Arizona
- Pediatric Cardiologist, Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts
- Pediatrician, Plano, Texas
- Radiologist, Santa Barbara, California



Conclusion

2009 presents many new opportunities for our industry to work with the medical community. As physicians continue to look for ways to provide better and more comprehensive care for their patients, it is essential that our industry take the lead and create new best practices for physician and patient education.

Our initial research demonstrates that physicians would welcome any and all tools to help them provide better quality care. Our initial research also demonstrates communication between pharmaceutical companies and physicians is strained if not fractured.

Physicians and medical institutions want and need pharmaceutical companies, promotional consultants, and the advertising and marketing industry to spend more time understanding how they can assist physicians as they continue to enhance their practices.

In the ultracompetitive environment of pharmaceutical marketing, physicians tend to only meet with a handful of pharmaceutical representatives they have come to know and like. Many physicians stated they welcome the opportunity to sit down with promotional consultants and pharmaceutical representatives together to discuss applications for promotional products that will help them offer tools for communication, education and care.

For more than a century, suppliers and distributors of promotional products have evolved and adapted as the landscape has shifted. We have been innovators and leaders that have met every challenge. Our industry is comprised of the best professionals, charged with distributing a tangible product to carry a message and elevate a brand.

Having been asked to add an education component to our roles as sales and marketing experts, we are confident we will evolve and excel to meet this new challenge.

As an industry comprised of 7,500 experts from all different disciplines and backgrounds, we are confident we will find solutions to help the pharmaceutical community, physicians and patients.

We look forward to working with you as we continue to demonstrate the value of promotional products.