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Committee of Advertising Practice (Non-broadcast)

Help Note on Asthma and Allergy Claims in Marketing for Devices

CAP Help Notes offer guidance for non-broadcast marketing communications under the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotions and Direct Marketing (the CAP Code). For advice on the rules for TV or radio commercials, contact Clearcast www.clearcast.co.uk for TV ads or the RACC www.racc.co.uk for radio ads.

These guidelines, drawn up by the Copy Advice team, are intended to help marketers, agencies and media interpret the rules in the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing as far as they relate to the subject discussed. They neither constitute new rules nor bind the ASA Council in the event of a complaint about a marketing communication that follows them.

Asthma and allergies affect people in different ways. Not only are asthma attacks and allergic reactions often triggered by different allergens, but one sufferer might have a much higher tolerance of an allergen than another. It is therefore difficult to predict the benefit, if any, to an individual of reducing the number of allergens in their environment by using devices such as specially designed vacuum cleaners, bedding and air filters.

1. Marketers who claim that their device can reduce the amount of allergens in the environment should hold relevant substantiation. Claims such as “Product X removes 99% of house dust mite faeces” are likely to be acceptable if marketers can prove them.
2. Marketers who claim that reducing the amount of allergens in the environment can benefit the health of asthma or allergy sufferers should be able to support these claims with satisfactory clinical trials on human subjects. Claims such as “Product X removes 99% of irritants”, “Product X removes 99% of house dust mite faeces, providing relief...” and “Product X removes 99% of house dust mite faeces, a common

trigger for reactions” are unlikely to be acceptable in the absence of these clinical trials.

3. Marketers who have proved that their product can benefit the health of asthma or allergy sufferers equally should not imply that all asthmatics or allergy sufferers can benefit where this is not the case. It may be necessary to qualify a claim to reflect, for example, that only those sufferers whose reactions are triggered by house dust mite faeces might benefit.

Advice on specific marketing communications is available from the Copy Advice team by telephone on 020 7492 2100, by fax on 020 7404 3404 or by email on copyadvice@cap.org.uk. The CAP website at www.cap.org.uk contains a full list of Help Notes as well as access to the AdviceOnline database, which has links through to relevant Code rules and ASA adjudications.

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