

Selling Sickness through unbranded disease awareness campaigns?

European legislation prohibits advertising of products that have prescription-only status, as well as stating that advertising of medicinal products, when it is allowed, should neither be misleading nor inconsistent with the summary of product characteristics.

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Key relevant underlying principles within the European legislation and the WHO Ethical Criteria for Medicinal Drug Promotion include avoidance of activities that take undue advantage of people's concerns for their own health, and promotion disguised as scientific or educational activities.

In this presentation ([download](#)), Teresa Alves has used illustrative case studies to explore the nature and content of the information provided by pharmaceutical companies about medical conditions and their diagnosis and treatment. Cases include a range of situations including chronic disease treatments, controversial expensive new drugs, disease prevention strategies, and lifestyle conditions.

The analysis of case studies brings up questions concerning the public health implications of the information that is provided by companies, as well as the potential risks and benefits for citizens. Are companies providing useful information or expanding markets to sell their products?