



DRUG COMPANIES TARGET CONSUMERS

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Despite numerous warnings from consumer health advocates, drug companies have continued to increase their direct-to-consumer advertising for prescription drugs.

Slick advertising in the form of television commercials and print ads are bombarding the public with promises of results for everything from allergy relief to male impotence.

According to a report from IMS Health, a British-based pharmaceutical information company, direct-to-consumer advertising costs reached a staggering 1.53 billion dollars in a 12 month period, through March 1999.

Drug companies don't "sell" their products through their multi-billion dollar campaigns. Instead, they instruct the consumer to ask their physicians about the products. This practice leaves doctors in a compromising and unscrupulous position of no longer being able to make decisions for their patients without outside influences. Indirectly, the drug companies have taken control of the prescription process, leading an unsuspecting public to a reality that threatens harm to their health and well-being.

Protests from concerned citizens and health care organizations have had little effect on this potentially dangerous trend. Pitching prescription drugs to the general public — while minimizing the frequency of dangerous side effects — is one medical profit wave that shows little sign of retreating any time soon.

SOURCE: Health Watch, Vol. 4, No. 3 & "Direct to Consumer Prescription Drug Advertising in U.S..." press release IMSHealth, June 12, 1999.