

Advertising by General Practitioners

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Introduction:

Definition of 'Advertise' (as given in the Oxford dictionary):

Promote publicly to increase sales; make generally known, seek to sell, fill (vacancy) or (& for) buy or employ by notice in news paper etc.

In this article, what we are concerned as advertising is giving information about General Practitioners and their activities to others. In this context and with reference to above definition what are relevant are the first two phrases in the definition, namely 'promote publicly to increase sales & make generally known'.

In the medical profession, the first phrase, namely 'to promote publicly to increase sales' is considered inappropriate.

The manner in which the second phrase in the definition, namely, 'make generally known' is implemented by the doctors is by provision of information in their place of work, which is regulated by the Sri Lanka medical council.

The public expects the family physicians to demonstrate professionalism while caring for their clients. In Sri Lanka the General Practitioners are in the private sector. The public expects the Family Physicians to perform their tasks to the best of their ability without much concern over the financial gain / rewards that accompanies such activities. This is also expected from the General Practitioners by the College of General practitioners and their colleagues.

All information should be factual; there should be no exaggerations or misleading statements, guarantees of cure, claims of superior qualifications, experience or skill. There should also be nothing disparaging about the services offered by other doctors (or institutions) or their qualifications, experience & skills. Information should not be presented in such a manner that it exploits the lack of medical knowledge of prospective patients. No doctor should claim that he/she is the sole authority on a particular subject or is the only person who could perform a particular procedure. No doctor should advertise his successes in treatment

Further, information provided should not place any General Practitioner at an undue advantage.

