



## 88. Prohibition of advertising on the radio or television

Published in August 2009

### Background

The provision of medical treatment is not the same as any other "consumer product", and because of the unique nature of the profession it is not similar to other "independent professions". The very existence of medicine is based on full trust between the patient and the physician, since there is a tremendous difference in knowledge between the two. The patient's dependency on the physician is absolute, so much so that in fact he places his life in the other's hands. The patient possesses no reasonable means of measurement to estimate or compare the quality of the treatment that he requires, or the qualifications, experience, knowledge and professional skill of the physician who offers him this treatment.

In the consumer culture that currently exists, can we choose the physician who treats us in the same way as we choose washing powder or a cell phone – under the influence of expensive and effective advertising in which the physician has invested money? Is it proper for us to permit the marketing of medical treatment as we permit the marketing of every other consumer product?

Section 11 of the Physicians Order [new version], 5736-1976, imposes strict restrictions on advertising for physicians. To quote: "A licensed physician shall not directly or indirectly engage in advertising of his occupation that may be misleading or harm the dignity of the profession".

Unfortunately, there are some physicians who do not respect the law and thus harm the dignity of the profession. Recently, crude self-advertising of physicians has been heard over the radio. If we do not halt this phenomenon we shall sooner or later reach a situation in which the weather forecast on the television will be accompanied by an advertising plug promoting the physician who sponsors the forecast.

The members of the Ethics Board felt that advertising and publicity on the radio or television are improper and harm the dignity of the profession, and they have consequently forbidden such advertising in this position paper.

### Position paper

- Medical treatment is not like a "consumer product" or any other service supplied to the public.
- Medical treatment is based on full trust between the patient and the physician, with differences of knowledge that make it difficult for the patient to choose the physician or the medical treatment that matches his needs.
- The selection of the physician or medical treatment should not be done under the



influence of self-advertising by the physician over the radio or television.

- Personal advertising of physicians by means of broadcast media harms the dignity of the profession and erodes the physician's status in society.
- The physician shall not advertise himself by means of radio or television and shall not permit publicity about him over these media channels.