



Public Health Association
of New Zealand Inc.

**DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER ADVERTISING DECISION BAD FOR PUBLIC
HEALTH SAYS PHA
8 December 2006**

The Public Health Association (PHA) says the decision to continue direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines will have negative consequences for public health.

The Therapeutic Products and Medicines Bill has been tabled for introduction into Parliament. The Bill sets out the direction for the continued advertising of therapeutic products in New Zealand.

PHA Director Dr Gay Keating says the organisation has a number of concerns about direct to consumer advertising.

“These include the ‘normalising’ of the use of medicine to improve health instead of lifestyle changes such as cutting back on fatty foods or exercising more, and the effect on doctor-patient relationships – with patients putting pressure on doctors to prescribe specific medicines.

“There is a risk that people will purchase pharmaceuticals based, not on what is best for their health, but on which company produces the most convincing advertisements. Rather than provide people with independent information on the risks and benefits, direct-to-consumer advertising focuses on creating a demand for specific products.

“People may end up paying for medicines that they don’t need, and that in the worst case scenario, may actually be harmful to them.”

She says the PHA believes a ban on direct-to-consumer advertising would have been in the best interests of the New Zealand public.

“New Zealand is one of only two countries that allows this sort of advertising – this was a great chance to come into line with the rest of the world. There is no benefit, and significant potential harm, in allowing direct-to-consumer advertising to continue in this country.”

For further information:

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The Public Health Association of New Zealand is a non-party political voluntary association, which provides a major forum for the exchange of information and stimulation of debate about public health in New Zealand.