

## CONTENTS

### **INTRODUCTION 9**

### **ABOUT THIS BOOK 11**

### **SECTION I - PRINCIPLES**

WHAT IS THE CODE?	13
WHERE DOES THE CODE APPLY?	14
WHAT DOES THE CODE COVER?	15
WHAT IS PROMOTION	18
CAN I PROMOTE THIS PRODUCT?	20
WHO CAN I PROMOTE TO?	20
CAN I SAY THIS?	21
HOW DOES A COMPANY STAY WITHIN THE CODE?	22
HOW IS THE CODE ENFORCED?	23

### **SECTION II - BASIC INGREDIENTS**

#### **CONTENT 25**

CONSISTENCY WITH THE SPC	25
ACCURATE	28
BALANCED	28
UP TO DATE	28
MISLEADING	29
HANGING COMPARISONS	32
SUPERLATIVES	33
EXAGGERATED CLAIMS	34
FOOTNOTES	35
NEW	35
OTHER COMPANIES' PRODUCTS	36
COST COMPARISONS	38
SIDE EFFECTS	41
NON-CLINICAL DATA	43
ARTWORK	44
GRAPHS AND FIGURES	45
STATISTICAL INFORMATION	51

CONTENTS *continued*

QUOTES	53
SUBSTANTIATION & REFERENCES	55
TASTE AND OFFENCE	58
TEASER ADVERTISING	59
SPONSORSHIP	60
SPONSONSHIP OF PRINTED MATERIAL	63
DISGUISED PROMOTION	66

**ESSENTIAL INFORMATION 68**

CODE NUMBER	68
DATE	68
PRESCRIBING INFORMATION (P.I.)	69
NON-PROPRIETARY NAME	74
BLACK TRIANGLE	75
ADVERSE EVENT REPORTING INFORMATION	76

**DISTRIBUTION OF PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL 77**

**SECTION III - 'RECIPES'**

**PRINTED MATERIAL 79**

ADVERTISEMENT	79
JOURNAL ADVERTISEMENT	80
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ADVERTISEMENT	81
ABBREVIATED ADVERTISEMENT	82
LOOSE INSERT	85
BOUND-IN INSERT	86
BOUND-ON OUTSERT	87
WRAPPER	88
BOOKMARK	89
DETAIL AID	90
LEAVEPIECE	91
PRODUCT MONOGRAPH	92
FORMULARY PACK	92
MAILING	92
LETTER	93

ENVELOPE	94
REPLY PAID CARD	95
MEETING INVITATION	96
MEETING PROGRAMME	97
MEETING NOTES	98
MEETING REPORT	99
EXHIBITION PANEL	100
'ADVERTORIAL'	101
REPRINT	102

## AUDIO-VISUAL AND OTHER MEDIA 104

SLIDE PRESENTATION	104
DVD/VIDEO/FILM	106
AUDIO	107
INTERACTIVE DATA SYSTEM	108
FAX	108

## DIGITAL ACTIVITY 109

PROMOTIONAL WEBSITE	111
WEBSITE FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC	113
WEBSITE FOR PATIENTS	114
LINKED WEBSITE	115
SPONSORED WEBSITE	116
ADVERTISEMENT IN ELECTRONIC JOURNAL	117
E-MAIL - PROMOTIONAL	118
E-MAIL - NON-PROMOTIONAL	119
E-DETAILING	119
WEBCAST	120
WIKIPEDIA	121
SOCIAL MEDIA	121
APPS	122

**'GIFTS'** 123

'GIFTS' FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL	124
'GIFTS' FOR PATIENTS	125
COMPETITIONS	126
MEDICAL AND EDUCATIONAL GOODS & SERVICES	127
THERAPY REVIEW	131
TEXTBOOKS	135
JOINT WORKING WITH THE NHS	136
COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS	139
PACKAGE DEALS	139
TERMS OF TRADE	139
DONATIONS	140

**SAMPLES** 141**MEETINGS** 143

IMPRESSION	145
PURPOSE	146
VENUE	147
HOSPITALITY	148
TRAVEL	149
ATTENDEES	150
MEETING PAYMENTS	151
SUPPORT TO ATTEND MEETING	152
MEETING DOCUMENTATION	153
MATERIALS	154
SPEAKERS	156
INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN THE UK	158
MEETINGS HELD OUTSIDE UK	160
THIRD PARTY MEETINGS	162
ADVISORY BOARD	165
CORPORATE EVENT	168
MEETING FOR PATIENTS OR GENERAL PUBLIC	168

**GENERAL PUBLIC****169**

REQUESTED INFORMATION	170
PROVIDED INFORMATION	170
REFERENCE INFORMATION	173
DISEASE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN	175
'DTCA' - 'DIRECT TO CONSUMER ADVERTISING'	177
GIFTS	177
MEETINGS	177
PATIENT ORGANISATIONS	178

**PUBLIC RELATIONS****182**

NEWS RELEASE - MEDICAL PRESS	184
NEWS RELEASE - CONSUMER PRESS	185
PRESS PACK	187
PRESS CONFERENCE	188
PRESS INTERVIEW	189
OTHER MEDIA	190
ARTICLES	191
USE OF OPINION LEADERS	192
USE OF PATIENTS	193
FINANCIAL INFORMATION	194
INTERNAL P.R.	194

**REPRESENTATIVES****195**

COMPANY RESPONSIBILITIES	195
TRAINING AND BRIEFING MATERIAL	196
DETAILING	198
CALLS	200
REPRESENTATIVE LETTER	202
OTHER REPRESENTATIVE-PRODUCED MATERIAL	203
REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITY	203

**THE PRE-LICENCE PERIOD 204**

ADVANCE BUDGETARY NOTICE	206
RESPONSE TO ENQUIRIES	207
PROVISION OF DISEASE INFORMATION	208
LEGITIMATE EXCHANGE OF MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION	208
'MEDICAL LIAISON EXECUTIVES'	211

**OTHER AREAS 214**

MARKET RESEARCH	214
CLINICAL RESEARCH	215
NON-INTERVENTIONAL CLINICAL STUDIES	217
MEDICAL INFORMATION	218
THIRD PARTY ACTIVITY	221
USE OF CONSULTANTS	222
DISCLOSURE	224

**SECTION IV - PROCEDURES**

CERTIFICATION	227
WITHDRAWAL OF MATERIAL	232
TRAINING	233
OTHER PROCEDURES	233
COMPLAINTS	234

**GLOSSARY 240**

**INDEX 244**

## WHAT IS PROMOTION?

The Code defines promotion as:

“any activity undertaken by a pharmaceutical company or with its authority which promotes the administration, consumption, prescription, purchase, recommendation, sale, supply or use of its medicines”

This definition encompasses a wide range of materials produced and activities undertaken by a pharmaceutical company, all of which are subject to the requirements of the Code.

Whether or not something is promotion depends not just on the material or activity itself but also on

- the purpose - perceived and actual
- how it is used
- the consequences of use

Deciding whether or not something is promotional is often difficult and should be taken by someone with adequate experience of the Code. It is best to start from the position that it is promotional, and then try to find justification for it not being promotional, rather than the other way round.

### Is it important to distinguish promotional and non-promotional activity?

Yes! The distinction between promotional activity and non-promotional activity is almost invariably a crucial one, but may often be a difficult distinction to make.

It is important because

- Medicines must not be promoted before licence – see p 20
- Medicines must not be promoted to the general public – see p 20
- There are certain specific requirements for promotional material, e.g. provision of Prescribing Information - see p69.
- Anything which is promotional must be clearly presented as promotional - see Disguised Promotion p66

### What is not promotion?

Some activities are usually described as ‘non-promotional’ but **no activity can be regarded as inherently non-promotional**. Virtually every activity is at least potentially promotional.

It is therefore not correct to say that a particular activity is non-promotional, but that that particular activity **must be** non-promotional.

Each activity which **must be** non-promotional, must meet all relevant Code requirements before it can be considered to **be** non-promotional. Requirements may relate to:

- The activity itself
- The purpose of the activity
- Materials associated with the activity
- Company staff involved in the activity

In many cases, failing to meet just one requirement will result in the activity becoming promotional. There is therefore a very fine line between being non-promotional and being promotional.

This area requires good judgement and considerable attention to detail.

## What activities may be non-promotional?

The Code lists a number of activities which are considered not promotional, provided that certain conditions are met:

- Replies to individual enquiries - see p.218
- Letters to professional journals – same requirements as replies – see p200
- Factual statements with no product claims e.g. pack changes, price lists,
- Information supplied in relation to Health Technology Assessments, provided the information is factual, balanced and not misleading.
- SPCs
- PARs (UK and European)
- Labelling and package leaflets (provided that they are not promoting the product). These are covered by regulations
- Information on health and disease states if no specific product is mentioned - however, if the information relates to a disease area of interest to your company, it may be considered promotional and within the scope of the Code, even if no product is mentioned.

## What activities **MUST** be non-promotional?

Information made available to patients or the general public – see p169

Relationships with Patient Organisations – see p 178

Public Relations activity – see p 182

The provision of medical and educational goods and services – see p 127

Clinical Research, including Non-interventional studies – see p 215

Market Research – see p 214

Activity during the pre-licence period.- see p 204

This list is not exhaustive.

## ADVERSE EVENT REPORTING INFORMATION

All promotional material must include the following statement about adverse event reporting:

‘Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard). Adverse events should also be reported to [relevant pharmaceutical company].

If the address of the website for reporting is changed by MHRA, the new address should be used in materials as soon as possible. All materials must include the new address within one year of the change.

An appropriate company telephone number or email address may be included.

The statement is required on all promotional items including those which do not need to carry P.I. i.e. abbreviated advertisements, exhibition panels.

The statement should be prominent. This will usually mean that it should be in a larger typeface than the P.I. Clearly separating it from other text e.g by being enclosed in a box, will also increase the prominence.

### Patient information

Any product information which is intended for patients taking that medicine must include the following or similar:

‘Reporting of side effects’

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

This includes any possible side effects not listed in the package leaflet.

You can also report side effects directly via the Yellow Card Scheme at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard).

By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine

## LOOSE INSERT

Refer to 'Checklist for Promotional Material'.

### Content

Consider all points on checklist.

### Essential information

All apply.

- A loose insert is considered as a stand alone piece. It must therefore:
  - Include a date, even if distributed solely with a journal
  - Contain P.I.
- A loose insert CANNOT be, or include, an abbreviated advertisement.

### Distribution

Distribution must be appropriate. Check that the usual readership of the journal is an appropriate audience for the insert e.g.

- a paediatric journal would not be appropriate for a product which is for adults only
- a journal for administrative staff would not be appropriate for an insert which was purely clinical.

### Specific issues/requirements

- Advertisement on a loose insert in a journal:
  - Must consist of:
    - no more than a single sheet
    - on a page size no larger than journal page size
  - May be printed on one or both sides. If printed on both sides, this counts as 2 pages
  - Counts towards total advertising for a journal which is limited to 2 pages bearing advertising per product per issue.
- The Code states that any inserts or supplements which are promotional, but not advertisements as such, are not limited to two pages.

The distinction is not at all clear. One possible interpretation is:

- A report of a congress which is promotional only on the basis that it mentions a product, would not be considered an advertisement and would not be limited to two pages
- A report of a congress which 'actively' promotes a product e.g. where a company has had editorial input or control, would be considered an advertisement and would be limited to two pages.

Until this area is further clarified, careful judgement is required.

- The insert should be clearly distinguishable from editorial material. It should be clearly and obviously distinguishable from the rest of the journal, in both appearance and layout.

## LINKED WEBSITE

### Does the Code cover a linked site?

Whether or not a linked site is covered depends on

- The nature of the website
- The selection of the website
- The content of the website
- The purpose of the link
- The link itself

### When is a linked site unlikely to be covered?

A linked site is unlikely to be covered by the Code, and a company is unlikely to be held responsible for that site if:

- the company has no input to or control over the linked site i.e. it is totally independent e.g. the website of a professional body or of a recognised patient group.
- the linked site is selected on the basis of quality, reputation et al
- The website contains no information about company products, or information only within an appropriate, general context .
- the link is provided as a resource to the reader
- the link is to the homepage of the website

### When is a linked site likely to be covered?

A linked site is likely to be covered by the Code, and a company is likely to be held responsible for that site if:

- the company has some input to or control over the linked site
- the linked site is selected on the basis of relevance to the company or its products rather than on quality, reputation etc
- the website contains information about company products – particularly if the information forms a substantial part of the website or is very prominent on it
- the link is used as a means of adding weight to a company message
- the link is to a specific part of the website