

Will we carry inserts again?

In January, *The Pharmaceutical Journal* carried an insert that had been sponsored by AstraZeneca. A number of readers later complained that it was disguising the promotion of a proprietary product as educational material. We published seven of these letters (3 February, p127).

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency ruled in March that the insert was not in breach of the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations. The Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority, which administers a voluntary code on behalf of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, published its own findings last week and concluded that it had broken many of the code's principles. (Details can be seen in the

It is not our role to make decisions that are the responsibility of the PMCPA

advertisement from the PMCPA published opposite p255, in a **News** story on p253 and in an **Article** p263.)

The Journal takes seriously its responsibilities relating to the material we carry: advertising and editorial material within its pages, supplements (ie, written or endorsed by either us or the Society) and inserts (ie, material generated elsewhere but distributed within the same wrapper as *The Journal*). We ensure to the best of our

abilities that advertisements do not make unsubstantiated claims, that editorial material published under our aegis is accurate and comes from reputable authors, and that nothing we publish is illegal or indecent. Indeed, much of what we wrote in a **Leading article** "We call this free speech" (3 February, p120) still stands.

Faced again with an insert that is produced independently — like the AstraZeneca one — we would treat it in roughly the way we did in January. We would take heed of the MHRA advice about authors' declarations of interest and that the involvement of a pharmaceutical company (or any other sponsoring organisation) should be clearly stated. However, we would not make the decision whether the insert constituted "sponsored educational material" or whether it was "promotional". We do not have the resources to review the contents in that light. Moreover, it is not our role to filter material and make decisions that are properly the responsibility of the PMCPA.

We have tried hard to be transparent about our decision-making and explained our rationale for accepting inserts of this nature and we accept that some pharmacists will disagree with our stance. We wish that those pharmacists who complained to *The Journal* had been equally transparent. We subsequently discovered that at least five of the seven correspondents have close professional links with the National Prescribing Centre — a body tasked with supporting activities that, inter alia, keep the NHS drugs bill under control. It has as much of an agenda as any pharmaceutical company and we were disappointed that only one of the correspondents declared his association with the NPC.

Editor and editorial director

Olivia Timbs
Tel 020 7572 2414

Deputy editor

Andrew Haynes, MRPharmS
The Society section
Tel 020 7572 2421

Managing editor

Graeme Smith, MRPharmS
Letters and other contributions
Tel 020 7572 2426

Assistant editor

Michael Thompson
Editor — PJ Online
Tel 020 7572 2428

News editor

Harriet Adcock, MRPharmS
Tel 020 7572 2415

Senior news and feature writer

Dawn Connelly, MRPharmS
Tel 020 7572 2427

News and feature writers

Tom Moberly
Tel 020 7572 2417
Matthew Wright, MRPharmS
Tel 020 7572 2430

Senior contributions editor

Lin-Nam Wang, MRPharmS
Continuing professional development
Tel 020 7572 2413

Contributions editor

Gemma Cleveland
Reviews
Tel 020 7572 2416

Website controller — pjonline.com

Gowan Clews
Tel 020 7572 2418

Personal assistant to the editor

Emma Kerby-Evans
Tel 020 7572 2414

Administrative assistant

Pauline Heslop
Branch meetings, copyright, permissions
Tel 020 7572 2422

Journal oversight board

Tim Albert
Noel Baumber, FRPharmS
Soraya Dhillon, MRPharmS
Niall Dickson (chairman)
Steve Wicks, MRPharmS

Acting head of sales

Peter Goacher

Office administrator — sales

Jo Cook

Website manager — pjcareers.com

Clare Knights

Display advertisement manager

Stuart Thomas

Classified advertisement manager

Lily Emery

Classified advertisement executive

Patrick Kearns

Head of publishing services

John Wilson

Production manager

Joanne Marks

Production assistants

Hillary Carter
Christopher Icha

Director of publications

Charles Fry