Guideline: Advertising and Improper Inducements to Treatment

The College has become aware of new approaches to marketing by some Registrants that represent naturopathic treatment as a “fun” or social activity. There is a concern that this style of marketing, taken to an extreme, has the potential to put patients at risk and bring the profession into disrepute.

The purpose of these guidelines is to set out acceptable advertising and marketing standards.

Advertising, Marketing, and Promotional Events

Naturopathic doctors must ensure that information provided in advertising, marketing, and/or promotional materials is not false, inaccurate, misleading, unverifiable, or contrary to the public interest in practising the profession. Naturopathic doctors should not advertise or offer services in such a way as to motivate patients to consent to those services simply on the basis of a discounted fee.

Naturopathic doctors should also avoid advertising, marketing and promotional activities that may encourage themselves or other naturopathic doctors to provide services to patients who may not be suitable for those services. Inducements, enticements, and/or incentives to patients may interfere with patients’ autonomy and naturopathic doctors’ fiduciary responsibility.

Naturopathic physicians must not offer or promote services in a way that may lead to perception of coercion, inducement, enticement, or inappropriate incentive.

Inappropriate incentives put the public at risk because they may:
- allow the self-interest of naturopathic doctors to displace their concern for patients’ wellbeing;
- promote the minimization of the inherent risk of treatment, whether this is understated by the naturopathic doctor or minimized in the mind of the patient;
- interfere with the patient’s ability to give informed consent to treatment; and
- interfere with the naturopathic doctor’s duty of confidentiality and the patient’s right to privacy.

To avoid the problems set out above, naturopathic doctors should not include in their advertising, marketing, or promotional activities:
- offers of prizes, gifts, gift certificates, card points, bonus points, discounts, time-limited benefits for medical services; and
- inducements, including alcoholic refreshments, for attendance at informational sessions promoting treatments, including cosmetic treatments.

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