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SUMMARY OF THE UNIFORM CODE FOR PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETING PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

The Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP) 2024, established by the Government of India's Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, aims to ensure ethical marketing practices within the pharmaceutical industry.

This code outlines standards for promotional activities, interactions with healthcare professionals, and the distribution of drug information, ensuring transparency and ethical conduct.

This summary provides an overview of the key components of the UCPMP, guiding pharmaceutical companies and professionals in maintaining high standards of conduct in drug promotion and marketing.

CHAPTER 1:
GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND CLAIMS

Promotion Definition:

Promotion encompasses all informational and persuasive activities by manufacturers and distributors that induce the prescription, supply, purchase, and use of medical drugs. These activities must adhere to ethical guidelines to ensure that the promotion is not misleading or unethical.

Marketing Approval:

A drug must be promoted only after receiving marketing approval from the competent authority. Promoting a drug before approval is prohibited and can lead to serious repercussions, including legal actions and fines.

Information Standards:

Information provided about drugs must be balanced, up-to-date, verifiable, and not misleading. It should accurately reflect current knowledge or responsible opinion and must be substantiated upon request by healthcare professionals. Misleading information, either directly or by implication, is strictly prohibited.

Evidence-Based Claims:

The word "safe" must not be used without qualification. It is essential to communicate that no medicine is entirely free of side effects, toxic hazards, or risk of addiction.

Qualified Use of "Safe:

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Use of New:

The term "new" must not describe any drug that has been generally available or promoted in India for more than a year. This prevents the misrepresentation of a product's novelty.

Fair Comparisons:

Comparisons of drugs must be factual, fair, and capable of substantiation. They must not mislead by distortion, undue emphasis, omission, or in any other way. Using brand names of products from other companies in comparisons requires prior consent from the companies concerned.

By adhering to these general principles and claims guidelines, pharmaceutical companies can ensure that their promotional activities are ethical, accurate, and responsible.

CHAPTER 2: TEXTUAL AND AUDIO-VISUAL PROMOTION

Consistency with Code:

All promotional materials must be consistent with the requirements of the UCPMP. This includes both textual and audio-visual materials distributed by or on behalf of the company.

Content Requirements:

Promotional materials must include the following essential information

Drug Name and Manufacturer:

The name and address of the authorization holder, or the business name and address of the part responsible for placing the drug on the market.

Active Ingredients:

A list of active ingredients using generic names, placed immediately adjacent to the most prominent display of the drug's name.

Dosage and Administration:

Recommended dosage, method of use, and administration, if not obvious.

Warnings and Precautions:

Adverse reactions, warnings, precautions for use, and relevant contraindications.

Additional Information:

A statement indicating that additional information is available on request, along with the date the information was last updated.

Professional Standards:

Promotional materials must conform to canons of good taste, recognizing the professional standing of the recipients and avoiding offense.

They must not imitate the devices, slogans, or layout of other companies in a way that could mislead or confuse

Prohibition of Misleading Content:

Materials must not disguise their true nature. For instance, promotional content must not resemble editorial matter in journals to avoid misleading the audience. Any promotional material in journals, paid for or arranged by the company, must comply with these standards.

Healthcare Professionals' Involvement:

The names or photographs of healthcare professionals must not be used in promotional materials, maintaining their professional integrity and avoiding any perceived endorsement.

CHAPTER 3: MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES AND BRAND REMINDERS

Ethical Conduct:

Medical representatives, including sales representatives and other company representatives who promote drugs, must maintain a high standard of ethical conduct. They must comply with all relevant UCPMP requirements and avoid any inducements or subterfuge to gain interviews with healthcare professionals

Prohibited Practices:

Representatives must not employ any inducements or subterfuge to gain interviews. Paying for access to healthcare professionals is strictly prohibited.

Company Responsibility:

Companies are responsible for the activities of their medical representatives. This responsibility should be clearly stated in employment contracts to ensure compliance with the UCPMP.

Brand Reminders:

Brand reminders are permitted in two categories: informational and educational items, and free samples provided to medical professionals. These items must adhere to strict conditions

Informational and Educational Items:

Items such as books, calendars, journals, and clinical treatment guidelines are allowed, provided their value does not exceed Rs. 1000 per item. These items should not have independent commercial value for healthcare professionals.

Free Samples:

Free samples must only be provided to qualified prescribers.

1. Samples must be handed directly to the person qualified to prescribe or their authorized representative.
2. Samples are provided to create awareness and experience with the product, limited to the dosage required for no more than three patients per course of treatment, and no more than twelve sample packs per drug per healthcare practitioner per year.
3. Each sample must be marked "free medical sample not for sale" and should not be larger than the smallest market pack.
4. Hypnotics, sedatives, and tranquillizers are excluded from sample distribution

CONCLUSION:

The UCPMP 2024 establishes comprehensive guidelines for ethical pharmaceutical marketing, emphasizing transparency, accuracy, and professionalism. By adhering to these guidelines, pharmaceutical companies can ensure responsible marketing practices that protect public health and maintain the integrity of the healthcare industry

Appendix:

Ethics Committee for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (ECPMP) Associations must establish ECPMPs to handle complaints and ensure compliance.

Lodging Complaints:

Detailed procedures for lodging complaints against breaches of the UCPMP.

Handling Complaints and Penalties:

Outline of the process for handling complaints and potential penalties for breaches, including suspension or expulsion from associations.

Self-Declaration:

Format for companies to declare compliance with the UCPMP.

Thank you for reading!