DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Food and Drug Administration
Silver Spring MD 20993

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to introduce a new U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) outreach program - the Bad Ad Program.

The purpose of the Bad Ad Program is twofold: first, to let you know about important steps FDA is taking to prevent misleading or inaccurate promotion of prescription drugs by drug companies; and second, to request your help identifying and reporting these activities. With your valuable assistance, FDA can be more effective in limiting the number of misleading promotional messages directed to health care professionals.

The impact of prescription drug promotion on health care professionals is significant. According to the Congressional Budget Office, pharmaceutical industry spending on advertising to health care professionals outpaces spending on Direct-to-Consumer advertising by nearly 3 to 1. This form of advertising directly to health care professionals, commonly called "detailing," occurs primarily in places such as medical offices, hospitals, pharmacies, at medical meetings and symposia, and sometimes other meeting facilities.

Informative and responsible promotional efforts by pharmaceutical companies can provide health care professionals with valuable information about the latest drug therapies. However, information that may affect prescribing decisions must be accurate and balanced. I am asking you to help FDA in our efforts to stop misleading prescription drug promotion.

FDA's Division of Drug Marketing, Advertising, and Communications (DDMAC) is charged with protecting the public health by assuring that prescription drug information is truthful, balanced, and accurately communicated. DDMAC's traditional regulatory activities for monitoring prescription drug promotion rely on review of industry promotional pieces submitted to FDA, complaints filed by the pharmaceutical industry, and field surveillance at large medical conventions. While these efforts are effective, FDA's ability to monitor other promotional activities, which may occur in any number of settings is limited. With the launch of the Bad Ad Program, FDA seeks to collaborate with health care professionals to address misleading promotion, wherever it may occur.

To kick off the Bad Ad Program, DDMAC will exhibit at major medical conferences starting this May. I invite you to visit an FDA booth to learn more about recognizing and reporting misleading drug promotion. In the meantime, I encourage you to report to FDA anything that may be misleading promotion. To report misleading promotion, simply call (877) RX-DDMAC (877-793-3622), or email a summary of the incident to BadAd@fda.gov. If you are unsure about what constitutes misleading promotion, or want to discuss the Bad Ad Program features in greater detail, please call DDMAC at (301) 796-1200.

The Bad Ad Program can only succeed with your collaboration. Your help in this effort will be most beneficial to FDA in helping to ensure that prescription drug promotional information is accurately communicated to the medical community.

Thank you for your contributions to protecting and maintaining the Nation's public health.

Sincerely,

Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D.
Commissioner of Food and Drugs

Enclosure – Key Points of FDA Health Care Professional Outreach (Bad Ad Program)