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TV's Targeted Comeback
Educational TV programming provides a new channel of information for disease sufferers

Many pharma marketers have pointed to the increasing use of DVRs, TV's continued fragmentation, diminishing audiences, and the backlash over drug ads as evidence that television no longer provides as valuable a medium for brands to communicate their messages to consumers. As a result, many companies have shifted their focus—and their dollars—from mass-market advertising to Internet and print ad campaigns to better target their audience base. (See "Change the Channel.")

Certainly, a change in media mix is a valid consideration. Of the 2,904 commercial messages that consumers receive each day, they pay attention to only 52, according to a study conducted by media giant Carat in 2003.

However, though consumers may be viewing fewer commercials, they're still watching TV and absorbing information. To that end, companies don't have to do away with television as a marketing platform completely. Instead, pharma companies should think about embracing new longer-form content options, targeted

TV channels, and creative on-demand alternatives that are likely to attract the segment of audience they're after.

Health Condition, by Channel

Health consumers are proactively searching for relevant tools to learn about their conditions—particularly as the incidence of chronic disease grows and the responsibility for managing those conditions falls to the consumer.

But the patients who are searching for disease information are increasingly taking the attitude of "my health, my disease, my media." These health-hungry consumers want easier access to the information that will help them better their lives. They don't want scheduled media; they want to control their TV programming just as they control their TiVos and iPods.

Certainly, disease-specific web

streams and broadcast options are beginning to emerge, providing pharma a vehicle to engage specific types of patients when and where they want to be reached. Until recently, these health condition programs aired primarily in hospital waiting rooms or patient rooms, and were used to help educate patients on their illness for a faster recovery. But now, consumers from households with cable or satellite television can access various health-related programs, like Medical Breakthroughs, airing on network affiliates in major markets, to prevent disease and hospitalization in the first place.

Some pharma companies already support these types of shows. Sanofi-Aventis, for example, promotes its long-acting insulin drug Lantus (glargine) through spots on the television show dLife, a national weekly TV program that's part of an



The dLife channel

features a weekly, half-hour talk show that speaks to the millions of Americans suffering with diabetes. Typically, a dLife host will field questions from a live audience to an



expert panel on a range of topics—from how diabetics can overcome their fear of needles to how to cook up diabetes-friendly dishes.

In addition, dLife's medical anchor, Dr. Bob Arnot, reports on the latest clinical advances in diabetes treatment and research.



integrated media platform, dLife, targeted to patients with diabetes.

dLife informs patients about new therapies, products, research, and tips on compliance—helping drive healthcare professionals' knowledge and motivation to keep patients persistent and compliant with management. The content is educational and lifestyle oriented, offering, for example, understanding the emotional impact of diabetes or an explanation of how insulin works. Because it is focused on a specific disease state, the audience that tunes in represents exactly whom companies want to reach—those who are eager to learn about therapy options for the specified disease or other co-morbid conditions likely to affect the patient.

Abbott Diabetes Care also works with dLife in support of its FreeStyle Flash blood-glucose monitor. Abbott sponsors a segment on the show called "Test! Don't Guess," in which the show's hosts and audience members test their blood sugar using the FreeStyle meter to stress the importance of frequent monitoring. Abbott also works with dLife to promote the Abbott Freedom Tour, a consumer outreach and detailing effort that promotes both dLife and FreeStyle across the U.S. This partnership was part of Abbott's 2005 marketing effort—its first year working with dLife—and contributed to the six percent share growth experienced by the company that year.

More pharma companies are likely to gravitate to these alternative broadcast mediums as they look for other ways to communicate to consumers and offer a more complete risk/benefit message that simply can't be done in a 30- or 60-second DTC ad.

Patients Become Proactive

Marketers should reorient their view

of consumers not simply as disease sufferers but as lifestyle marketing segments, much as one would view NASCAR fans, gardeners, or golfers. These patients may be hungry for health information, but they also want it delivered more conveniently and ubiquitously.

To that end, new options are emerging that recognize where media and consumer medicine are converging. WebMD, for example, is moving toward deepening the content in each disease state and examining distribution of this electronic content beyond just the Web. These tactics are shaping up to allow companies to think vertically by disease state, not by medium, in order to target segments of patients. Ultimately, the goal is to give those who need the information an easily accessible, organized, and structured opportunity to receive it where, when and how they want it.

Instead of pulling out of mass DTC in all of its broadcast forms, pharma advertisers and their agencies should consider these longer-form targeted channels and on-demand content options to inform audiences. Although that means leaving the comfort zone of 60-second ads for a brave new world of targeted and integrated programming, it certainly is the way forward for companies wishing to continue leveraging the beneficial aspects of television and empower a new age of health programming.



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