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New Trends in Medicalization

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Barros JA. Nuevas tendencias de la medicalización. New Trends in Medicalization. Ciencia & Saúde Coletiva (Rio de Janeiro, Brasil) 2008 Abril; 13(Sup): 579-587.

Objectives: To analyze the impact of **promotional strategies** aimed at the consumption of medicines within the practices of both health professionals and consumers.

Methodology: Analytical interpretation.

Results: Propaganda in the mass media is the primary advertising strategy for medications. This is based on the **biomedical model** and business interests. In the article the author selects four medical problems to analyze this strategy: **anorexia**, attention deficit disorder, depression and **andropause**. With anorexia, there remain incentives based on the promotion of values associated with thinness and the possession of a healthy, beautiful and socially achievable body through the use of amphetamines that inhibit appetite. With regard to combating attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, the author identifies in health professionals the use of two strategies: One is, to publicize these disorders as uncontrolled epidemics and exacerbate the severity of their symptoms; the other is, to characterize these disorders through a superficial diagnosis, combined with the study of their treatment and etiology with little scientific basis. These practices depend on imprecise data to promote in consumers the irrational use of medicines.

Referring to the andropause, Barros proposed that pharmaceutical companies are using marketing to magnify low sexual performance even at a young age, encouraging early detection through self-administered questionnaires, and spreading distorted information about treatment with synthetic hormone replacement. Finally, referring to depression, the author warns about the financial benefits that companies could reach thanks to the application of two promotional strategies for the encouragement of the use of **antidepressants**: one is the construction of an exacerbated pattern of behaviors and emotions that magnifies the identification of depressed patients, and the other is the promotion of a table that shows positive reactions in the mood of the users through the use of drugs.

Conclusions: The use of marketing intensifies the irrational and inappropriate consumption of drugs, generating huge profits for pharmaceutical companies. For the author, these tactics have artificially expanded the definition of disease in order to obtain greater number of superficially diagnosed patients. The promotion and marketing of medicines is trapped in the logic of the market.