

ADVERTISING

Queries are regularly received on the type information that may be included on advertisements of services rendered at a practice. The following ethical rules exist and any advertisement should be measured against these rules for possible unprofessional conduct:- “(1) A practitioner shall be allowed to advertise his or her services or permit, sanction or acquiesce to such advertisement: Provided that the advertisement is not unprofessional, untruthful, deceptive or misleading or causes consumers unwarranted anxiety that they may be suffering from any health condition. (2) A practitioner shall not canvass or tout or allow canvassing or touting to be done for patients on his or her behalf”.

A few pointers in this regard:

- Do not draw attention, either verbally or by means of printed or electronic media to personal qualities, superior knowledge, quality of service, professional guarantees or best practice as this could be construed as canvassing patients.
- Do not draw attention, either verbally or by means of printed or electronic media to one's offers, guarantees or material benefits, not falling within the categories of professional services or items.
- Graphics and anatomical structures/ a photograph of a medical practitioner on advertisements are permissible provided that it is not indecent, deceptive, misleading or bring the profession into disrepute.
- Previous restrictions of 1.5m x 1.5m for outside sign boards is not applicable anymore however excessively large outside notices could constitute unprofessional conduct.
- Outside notices could be made in more than two colours.
- Direct mailing of pamphlets with factual information are permissible, however, bulk distribution at street corners may be construed as unreasonably drawing attention to the practice.
- Avoid using phrases like “conditions apply” – such conditions must be specifically indicated in the advert at all times.
- Do not advertise the practice's tariffs to the public at large. You may put up a notice in the practice to inform your own patients of the tariffs.

The following information may appear on adverts, letterheads, account forms and electronic stationery:- practitioner's name; profession; registered category; speciality or subspeciality or field of professional practice (if any); registered qualifications or other academic qualifications or honorary degrees in abbreviated form; registration number; addresses (including email address); telephone and fax numbers; practice or consultation hours; practice code number; and dispensing licence number (if any).