

Disease Mongering and Pharma Credibility



Patient Education and Disease Awareness Summit

January 22-23, 2006 * West Conshohocken, PA

Point Counterpoint Discussion

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Definition

“Disease mongering” is a term that was coined by the late journalist Lynn Payer to describe what she saw as the confluence of interests by some doctors, drug companies, patient advocacy groups and media in exaggerating the severity of illness and the ability of drugs to “cure” them.

Examples

- **Restless Leg Syndrome** - Prevalence of rare condition exaggerated
- **Irritable Bowel Syndrome** - Promoted as a serious illness needing therapy, when usually a mild problem
- **Menopause** - Too often medicalised as a disorder when really a normal part of life

Source: PLoS Medicine, April 2006

“Motivational Deficiency Disorder”

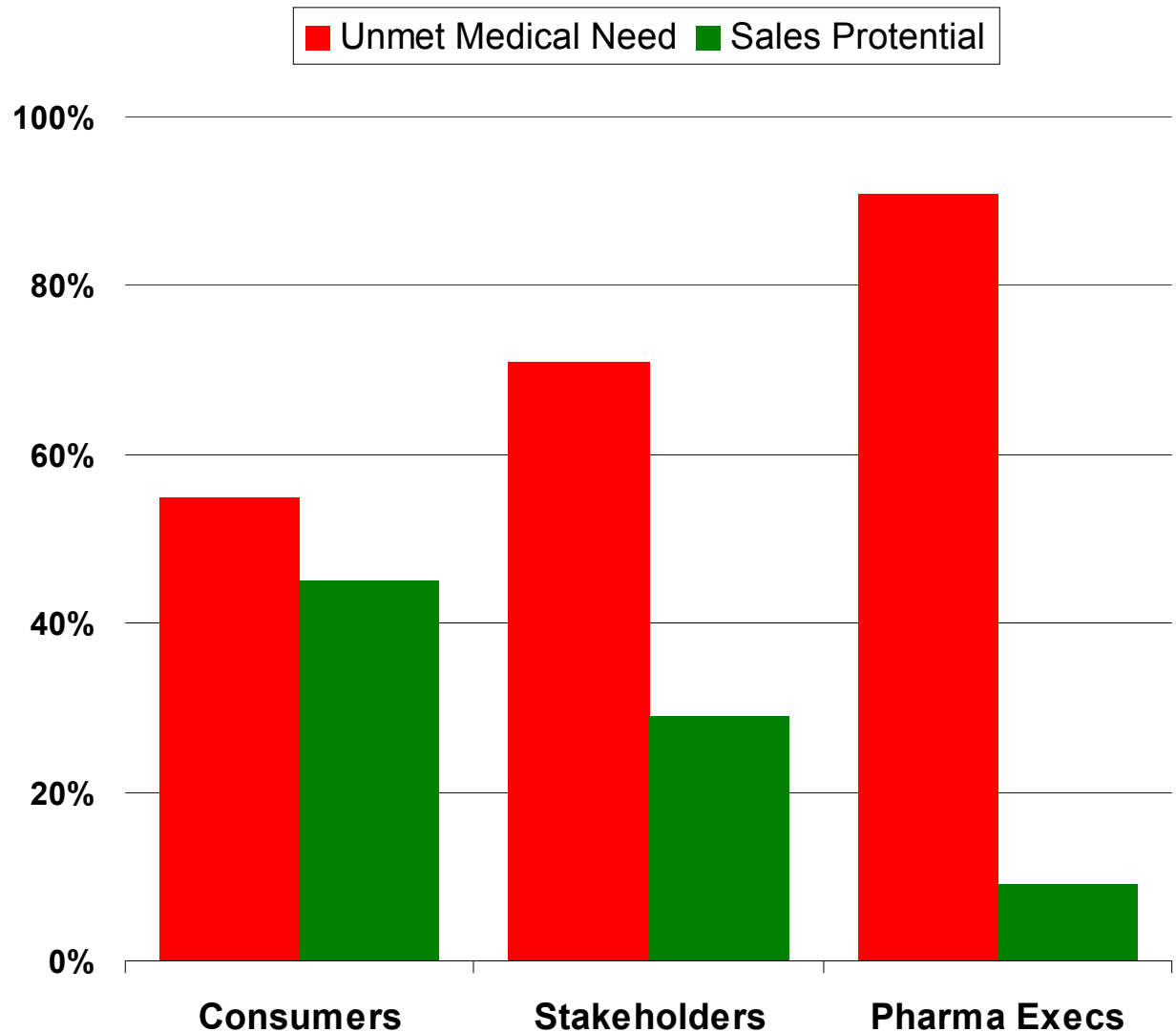


A new Epidemic



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoppJOtRLe4>

What Does Pharma Consider Most When Deciding to Develop New Drugs?



Source: "Recapturing the Vision: Restoring Trust in the Pharmaceutical Industry by Translating Expectations into Actions." PricewaterhouseCoopers Survey

Point/Counterpoint Discussions

- Is it a real issue?
- Lack of blockbuster drugs in pipeline a factor?
- Influence of DTC advertising
- Impact on pharma credibility

Is It a Real Issue?

- **POINT:** Yes, there is evidence that pharma exaggerates the severity or prevalence of some medical conditions.
- **COUNTERPOINT:** Not really. There is plenty of independent data that support the severity and prevalence of these conditions.

Lack of Blockbuster Drugs

- **POINT:** Big pharma has accelerated disease mongering because blockbusters don't happen anymore.
- **COUNTERPOINT:** There may be less blockbusters today than in the past, but these are legitimate medical conditions that pharma companies have a right to develop drugs for. The FDA, market and patients can decide if there is validity and demand for the products.

Influence of DTC Advertising

- **POINT:** Disease mongering is a natural outgrowth of DTC advertising, which tends to include as broad an audience as possible as its target in order to justify the expense.
- **COUNTERPOINT:** On the contrary, DTC advertising is proven to be very effective in bringing patients to doctors for the diagnosis of conditions that otherwise would go untreated.

Impact on Pharma Credibility

- **POINT:** Disease mongering is another nail in the coffin of pharmaceutical industry credibility.
- **COUNTERPOINT:** There are other, more tangible, causes for the decline in the trust and credibility of the pharmaceutical industry.

For More Information

- **Pharma Marketing Talk Podcast**

- <http://www.talk.pharma-mkting.com/show004.htm>

- **PLoS Issue Devoted to the Subject**

- <http://collections.plos.org/plosmedicine/diseasemongering-2006.php>

- **Inaugural Conference on Disease Mongering**

- <http://www.diseasemongering.org/>

- **Find this presentation online at:**

- <http://www.pharma-mkting.com/DMpointcounter.pdf>

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