

COMPLAINT NUMBER	17/198
COMPLAINANT	M Smith
ADVERTISER	Brand Developers Ltd
ADVERTISEMENT	Brand Developers Ltd, Television
DATE OF MEETING	4 July 2017
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Brand Developer's Health Centre Massage Chair shows the various functions of the massage chair, including interviews and testimonials advocating the benefits of massage for stress relief.

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Complainant, M Smith, said: Advert made effectiveness claims that are not supported by scientific evidence, and potentially dangerous to people with mental health issues.

The advert mentioned that anxiety, depression, drug dependence, and panic attacks lead to stress, and that the massage chair reduces stress.

This inference leads the viewer to believe that the product helps these conditions. In fact, the current scientific evidence on this is limited or nonexistent.

The advert then states the product "helps and anxiety and depression". Again this is not supported by evidence.

The advert makes no mention of any sources, journals, or scientific studies to support such far reaching claims.

By doing so, the advert dangerously infers that mental health sufferers, with serious but treatable conditions, can be helped by the product. This may delay such people from seeking medical or psychological treatment, which has actually been proven to be effective.

I find the advert irresponsible. As the maker of these claims, the onus is on the advertiser to provide evidence to support them. I suspect that reputable evidence, as accepted by the broad scientific community, does not exist and therefore such claims are false.

The relevant provisions were Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code - Guideline 2(a), Principle 1, Principle 2.

The Chair noted the Complainant's concern that the advertisement made irresponsible and unsubstantiated claims about the benefits of the massage chair on mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and drug dependency.

The Chair reviewed the 30-minute infomercial in conjunction with clarification of specific points provided to the Secretariat by the Advertiser.

The Chair noted claims in the advertisement related to the use of massage and relaxation to relieve aches and pains and to help relieve stress. In the Chair's view, the advertisement did not claim to treat chronic health conditions but noted the connection between stress and how it can lead to more serious health conditions including anxiety or depression.

The Chair confirmed the reference to drugs in the advertisement was to prescription medication and was in the context of serious stress and anxiety contributing to poor health. The Chair agreed this was consistent with the messaging in the advertisement on the value of relaxation and managing stress.

The Chair noted the advertisement included some references appropriate to the level of claims being made about massage and relaxation.

The Chair also confirmed that the advertisement had received approval from the Therapeutic Advertising Pre-vetting Service (TAPS).

Taking into account the actual claims in the advertisement relating to benefits from massage and relaxation in reducing stress, the Chair ruled there was no apparent breach of the Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code.

Accordingly, the Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Chair's Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**