



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

1. Case Number :	0226-20
2. Advertiser :	Sonus Complete
3. Product :	Health Products
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	Internet
5. Date of Determination	22-Jul-2020
6. DETERMINATION :	Upheld - Not Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.3 Violence
AANA Code of Ethics\2.6 Health and Safety

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This advertisement is a YouTube video embedded in a website. The video is 58 minutes long. It begins with a man saying "Almost three years ago, I was holding a gun to my head, ready to blow my brains out, while my entire family watched in horror. It was my 53rd birthday party, and the ringing in my ears was so excruciatingly loud that when my wife and children began to sing happy birthday, I completely lost it. I went straight to the bottom left dresser of my drawer, pulled out my secret Glock 29, and counted 3, 2, 1. But when I took one last look into my son's tearful eyes, my hand started trembling so bad that I dropped the gun. The bullet passed dangerously close to my wife's cheek and went through the ceiling. Of course I never meant to scare my family like that, and I'll never forgive myself for having put them through this nightmarish scene, but it was that precise moment that sent me on a completely unexpected two year long journey through the dark underbelly of the multi-billion dollar medicine industry controlled by government and elite societies". The video continues with the man promoting the benefits of the product and providing testimonials from others.

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

Given the current valid concerns surrounding mental health in society and the impacts of poor mental health, including suicide, I don't think I need to go into any further



detail for you to conclude that such a graphic description by a so-called doctor about how he wanted to 'blow his brains out' is totally inappropriate and should be removed immediately. Please ensure this happens. The media should be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

Advertiser did not provide a response.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement is inappropriate in its reference to suicide.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser did not respond.

The Panel noted that a link to this advertisement appeared at the bottom of a news article on an Australian news website. The Panel noted that the product being promoted was available for purchase in Australia. The Panel considered that this was an advertisement directed to Australians and therefore was subject to the AANA Code of Ethics.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Panel noted that the opening scenes of the advertisement feature a man telling a story about a suicide attempt in which he held a gun to his head in front of his family and then dropped the gun causing it to fire and the bullet nearly hitting his wife. The Panel noted that different visual scenes had been used to illustrate the man's story, including footage from the movie *Lethal Weapon* and footage of a gun.

The Panel considered that the footage of the gun, the man holding a gun to his head and counting backwards, and the story of the man's suicide attempt were extremely detailed and violent and would be confronting to many watching the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the advertised product is a treatment for tinnitus, and that a graphic and detailed description of a suicide attempt was a clear depiction of violence and that depiction was not justifiable in an advertisement for a medical product.



The Panel noted the genuine community concern around suicide and violence and considered that the use of a graphic reference to a suicide as a component of a promotion to sell a medical product is contrary to contemporary community values. The Panel determined that the advertisement did breach section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety”.

The Panel noted that the advertisement did contain a detailed description of a suicide attempt including the type of gun used. The Panel considered that there is significant community concern around the way suicide is referenced in the media.

The Panel noted that in a resource funded by the Australian Department of Health, Mindframe, advises that depictions and references to suicide in the media, especially those where the method and location is detailed, may lead to an increase in suicide deaths, especially in those with suicide ideation (<https://mindframemedia.imgix.net/assets/src/uploads/Mindframe-for-media-book.pdf>).

The Panel considered that prevailing community standards in relation to the depiction of, or reference to, suicide in the media would be in line with best practice recommendations, including the need to promote health seeking and minimise risk.

The Panel considered that this advertisement uses a detailed description and representation of a suicide attempt in order to draw attention to a product. The Panel considered that this depiction had the potential to be damaging to those at-risk of suicide who may view this advertisement.

The Panel considered that prevailing community standards on this sensitive matter are that suicide in advertising should only be referenced in the context of suicide prevention advertisements and should not be used to promote a product or service. The Panel considered that the advertisement did depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety and did breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did breach section 2.3 and 2.6 of the Code, the Panel upheld the complaint.



THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

We are working on eliminating from our ad the video elements that are non-compliant. Since this is a process that will take some work, we will let you know as soon as the required changes were implemented.

Ad Standards will continue to monitor the availability of this advertisement.