



ADVERTISING  
STANDARDS  
BUREAU

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# Case Report

1	Case Number	0442/13
2	Advertiser	Pharmacare Laboratories
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	15/01/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## ISSUES RAISED

Food and Beverage Code 2.2 - healthy lifestyle / excess consumption  
Food and Beverage Code 2.8 False meal substitute

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This advertisement features various people describing how using Reducta Chewing Gum helps them to reduce hunger and between-meal snacking. The different scenes include a woman reaching for the gum instead of chocolate and a man serving a meal to his family.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*The advertisement breaches the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising & Marketing Communications Code; sections 2.2 and 2.8. The advertisement undermines the importance of maintaining a balanced diet and healthy eating by encouraging women to replace food with chewing gum. The advertisement uses actors that are slim and young to sell the product, alluding to the idea that you should restrict your eating even when you're slim (breaching section 2.8). This is a problem, as this behaviour of replacing food with chewing gum is a common trait of people with eating disorders. This advertisement takes advantage of our society's obsession with being thin and encourages the unhealthy habits of restricting eating. Having had an eating disorder myself, I know full well the impact an advertisement like this can have on anyone who struggles with eating disorders of any level.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*We are surprised to hear that our Reducta Chewing Gum advertisement has been linked in any way to the very serious struggles that face those with eating disorders. We believe we comply with section 2 and 3 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code as well as section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics. We strongly believe that the average consumer would correctly understand this advertisement portrays a weight maintenance support tool to help support healthy weight management in Australian adults when used in conjunction with a healthy diet and lifestyle.*

*Section 2.2 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code*

*A healthy, balanced meal is featured in this ad with a healthy looking man in his 30s-40s serving a healthy meal to his family. This visual helps contextualise the Reducta gum product as a tool to be used alongside a healthy balanced diet and helps reinforce the placement of this product as a weight management support tool only. The men and women featured in this ad are shown at work, home, with their family and going out with friends. Taken together, this portrays active, healthy, plugged-in members of society – quite the contrary of undermining healthy or active lifestyles. Hence we do not feel that we are in contravention of section 2.2 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code.*

*Section 2.8 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code*

*At no point during this advertisement is there any inference to replacing meals with Reducta Chewing Gum. It is clearly placed as a weight management support tool to be used to help reduce hunger and snacking. All claims made in this ad pertain to reducing; hunger, snacking, portion sizes, and sweet cravings. Nowhere in this ad is Reducta Chewing Gum implied to serve as a meal replacement. As mentioned above, one of the visuals portrays a man serving a healthy looking meal to his family which further reinforces that this product is not placed as a meal replacement. As such we do not feel we are in contravention of section 2.8 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code.*

*Section 3 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code*  
*This ad is not directed at children in any way. The target audience is men and women in their 30s-40s.*

*Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics*

*This ad is not discriminatory, does not employ sexual appeal, violence, nudity, obscene language or contravene health and safety standards. Hence we believe it complies with the AANA code of ethics, section 2.*

*Further response to original complaint;*

*The complainant refers to the advertisement as displaying already slim people but we would like to point out that the script involves healthy Australians discussing their weight in the past tense i.e. they have used Reducta Chewing gum to help them achieve and maintain their healthy weight. Using healthy looking Australians in an ad such as this is aspirational for consumers who desire to embrace healthy diet and lifestyle practices in order to achieve optimal health.*

*We do not feel that we are “taking advantage of our society’s obsession with being thin”. We are sensitive to the many different problems people have managing their weight. That being said, a lot of Australians struggle with maintaining their optimal weight. We strongly assert that our advertisement targets the common Australian adult, looking for support achieving*

*their healthy weight goals. We feel that this balanced message is clearly conveyed via both the script and the visuals in our advertisement.*

*In summary, we believe we comply with section 2 and 3 of the AANA Food & Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code as well as section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics. We feel we have responsibly and accurately portrayed this weight management support tool, targeting otherwise healthy Australian adults looking for a little extra help in achieving their weight related goals. We have attached our substantiation of the evidence to support the claims for this product. We believe that an average consumer would correctly understand this advertisement portrays a weight maintenance support tool to help support healthy weight in Australian adults when used in conjunction with a healthy diet and lifestyle.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches the AANA Food and Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code (the Food Code) and Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement undermines the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and encourages consumers to replace their meals with Reducta Chewing Gum.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Board noted that the product advertised is food and that therefore the provisions of the AANA Food and Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code (the Food Code) apply. In particular the Board considered Section 2.2 of the Food Code which provides: “Advertising or marketing communications for food or beverage products shall not undermine the importance of healthy or active lifestyles nor the promotion of healthy balanced diets...”

The Board noted the advertisement is promoting a chewing gum product which can help reduce hunger and between meal snacking.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement is undermining a healthy diet by suggesting you should chew gum rather than eat food.

The Board noted that the advertisement features people describing how Reducta Chewing Gum has helped them to reduce their appetite, reduce their portion sizes and lose their sweet cravings. The Board noted that a voiceover says that Reducta can be used “...whenever you feel the urge to snack or before meals”. The Board noted that in one scene we see a man serving a meal to his family and stating that he has reduced his portion sizes and considered that the overall message is that the chewing gum should be used alongside meals rather than instead of eating a meal. The Board noted that the advertisement does not make any comment on which meals should be eaten however the Board considered that not commenting on a healthy balanced diet does not of itself amount to undermining a healthy balanced diet.

Based on the above the Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of

the Food Code.

The Board considered Section 2.8 of the Food Code which provides: “Advertising or Marketing Communications for food and/or beverage products not intended or suitable as substitutes for meals shall not portray them as such.”

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement suggests replacing meals with Reducta Chewing Gum. As noted above the Board considered that the advertisement did not suggest that the advertised product should be used instead of a meal but rather as a replacement for snacks or to help reduce appetite. The Board considered that the advertisement clearly presents Reducta Chewing Gum as a product to reduce hunger and not suggest that the product should be used as a meal substitute.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.8 of the Food Code.

The Board considered 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 Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the actors used in the advertisement are all slim and that encouraging slim people to lose weight can lead to eating disorders.

The Board noted that the people in the advertisement all use past tense to describe their experience of using the advertised product, including “How did I lose weight?”, “I reduced my portion sizes...” and “I lost my sweet cravings...” The Board considered that the advertisement is showing the after results of using the product and that there is no suggestion that the actors need to lose any more weight. The Board considered that the actors all look healthy and of normal weight.

The Board recognised that eating disorders are a serious issue in the community but considered that in this instance the advertisement did not encourage slim people to lose weight and did not condone or encourage people to develop eating habits which could lead to an eating disorder.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Food Code or the Code of Ethics the Board dismissed the complaint.