



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	158/07
2. Advertiser	GlaxoSmithKline Aust Pty Ltd (Nicabate)
3. Product	Health products
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Health and safety – section 2.6
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 12 June 2007
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement shows an animated scene depicting the inside of someone's brain, where numerous animated beasts representing brain receptors pop up, laughing and smiling. A male voiceover advises "Quit smoking and this is what you're up against. Smoking increases the number of receptors in your brain that thrive on nicotine. Take their supply away...they go mad" - as we see the animated images go berserk. "They won't let you break the habit without a fight" the voiceover continues, as the scene changes to red and the images are seen going mad from lack of nicotine, screaming and slamming against the inside of the brain. A solution is given "The therapeutic nicotine in Nicabate patches, lozenges and gum reduces nicotine cravings so you can wean the beasts off gradually". As images of the Nicabate product are seen on screen, the beasts gradually become subdued, as the voiceover concludes "Give your willpower a fighting chance to do the rest".

THE COMPLAINT

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

I feel the advertisement unnecessarily shows quitting smoking as an overly difficult task in an effort to promote Nicabate products as the single and only way smokers will be able to quit. I believe smokers need as much positive encouragement as possible to successfully quit. However this advertisement appears, even inadvertently, to discourage smokers from quitting unless they use Nicabate products. The message is one of negativity, that quitting is too difficult, that you will "go mad" trying and "won't ... break the habit". Even the tag-line suggests that those trying to quit, including those using Nicabate products, will only have a "fighting chance" of succeeding.

Overall, I feel the advertisement's tone is unnecessarily pessimistic and disparaging regarding quitting smoking, and thus may even be seen to encourage those already addicted to continue. I feel this is at odds with current advertising policies regarding tobacco products, and also in breach of part 2.6 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

Quitting smoking is not easy because it is addictive. This involves a "physical dependence or addiction" to the nicotine in cigarette smoke which is reinforced by the rituals and habits of smoking i.e. "behavioural dependence or addiction". To successfully quit therefore, the smoker has to overcome both the physical and behavioural dependencies. When smoked nicotine is removed during quitting, the smoker develops withdrawal symptoms such as cravings, irritability, frustration, anger anxiety, etc. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) helps reduce these symptoms so that the quitter can simultaneously work on overcoming the behavioural dependence through

willpower and other support (friends, family, counselling and motivational programs, etc). The animated Nicabate advertising campaign is designed to educate smokers on why it can be difficult to quit smoking because of the withdrawal symptoms and strong cravings for cigarettes when they stop smoking and explain how NRT can help them successfully overcome their addiction.

The advertising does not state or imply that using Nicabate is the only way to quit smoking. It is intended to help smokers better understand how therapeutic nicotine (in the form of patches, lozenges or gum) combined with will power can help ease the cravings can increase their chances of quitting successfully.

GSK has consulted many medical specialists, smoking cessation experts and anti-smoking lobbyists in developing such materials and campaigns for smokers. Contrary to the complainant's assertion that the advertising is pessimistic and at odds with current advertising policies regarding tobacco products, all of these experts agree that an important aim of such campaigns should be to explain the role of nicotine in the process of addiction and the role of NRT in the treatment of this addiction. Additionally, this advertising has also been very well received overseas and has tested very positively with smokers here in Australia.

As far as the tagline "Nicabate helps give your willpower a fighting chance" is concerned, this reinforces the fact that willpower plays a significant role in the quit process. GSK believes that this is a responsible message to communicate to smokers and as such, we believe that the content of the advertisement is within the bounds of prevailing community standards on health and safety.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code") particularly whether the advertisement depicts material that is contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety.

The Board noted that the complainant considered that the advertisement depicted smoking as being overly difficult to stop without the aid of the advertised product.

The Board viewed the advertisement and considered that the advertisement accurately depicted the difficulty of quitting smoking and a legitimate role for the product. The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to community standards on health and safety.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.