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Medicine and Drug Advertising in the 19th Century

# Introduction

A drug is prescribed with greater care by health professionals because patients are unaware of the proper usage of the medicine. Realizing the need, the US government initiated a proper set of requirements to prescribe a drug. All the health providers are instructed to follow those rules and standards. Nowadays, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority is looking after the proper selling and advertising of the drugs in the United States. However, in the past, there were no regulations but there was the concept of marketing the drugs and medicines (Minnie and Drezin, pp. 86-95). The drugs advertising started back in the 19th century when different home-made medicines were sold to the consumers directly. In the early days, print ads were unknown to the people.

Likewise, before FDA, life was different and ways of advertising medicine were also schanged. The following paper is supposed to discuss the different methods of advertising in the 19th or 20th century when there was no FDA. It comparatively studies the era before the FDA and the current period where without FDA is impossible to sell anything legally.

# Discussion

In the 19th century, people used to find salesmen selling snake oil and other patent medicines directly to the customers. At that time, print commercials were not regulated, and newspaper advertisement for patent drugs usually used exaggerated language making people that it is the only medicine. They would sell one medicine as a cure to all the diseases a person can ever have. They used to promise that any cure is possible with a single drug. The advertising firms and marketers used such languages that people even doubt the remedies the professional healthcare providers offered (Donohue, pp. 659-699). People started hesitating to use the medicines offered by professional doctors. Likewise, the medicine sellers were positioning their products as an alternative to the medical care provided by a doctor.

The 19th century was free from the concept of legal or ethical drugs. The word "prescription drugs" is used nowadays for those medicines that are according to the rules and regulations. Thus, the old days of marketing of drugs were not good for the consumers. As they were unaware of the usage of the drug. They were just experimenting the medicine whether it is effective or ineffective. At the same time, there were no regulations to charge the pharmacies or drug sellers for side effects of the medicine. The 19th century was an era of experiments for drug sellers and producers. People were randomly trying crazy formulas, patent those and would advertise in the market like they have discovered a cure for death. The reason for it was no regulation by the government. As people were free to do anything so they were trying to manipulate people to use their medicine.

However, things changed in the early 20th century. The American Medical Association was formed as a council to overlook Pharmacy and chemistry in the United States in 1905. For the first time, a drug was legalized and people learned about the legitimate drug. Likewise, the Council developed a handbook of medicines that were used at that time. Moreover, the medical publications were also directed to follow those directions in case of running ads or promotions for certain drugs. As a result, only those ads were accepted by the Medical Journals those were listed in the handbook. At the same time, the council did not accept the advertisements for medicines which were directly focusing the public without consulting the council.

Similarly, the FDA took the responsibility of supervising the drug commercials. All Pharmaceutical companies were bound to follow the rules and regulations. The people of the 19th century was wasting money in medicines that turned out to be ineffective later on. All of those medicines would contain high levels of morphine, mercury and other substances that could cause serious harm to the ill person. On the other side, the current world is seriously concerned about the public health.

Currently, the Food and Drug Administration safeguards the health of the people by promoting safety, usefulness, and security of the products including the pharmaceutical products. It oversees the approval and advertising of the medicines based on various laws. The authority runs based on Federal laws for food, medicine, and cosmetics. At the same time, it also addresses the issues related to prescription medicine advertising. It also ensures that all the advertisements for drugs and medications are accurate and valid. The regulations of marketing of drugs are to avoid misleading techniques. Under FDA, a proper Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) researches. The goal of this center is to ensure that drug factories are selling the prescription drugs that are honest and also the information is open for the consumers (Palumbo and Mullins, p.423). There are other sub-departments which overlook the other activities like taking an action against the marketers that violate the law.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, regulating the advertisements for drugs and medicines have made things clear nowadays. It is playing an essential role in protection of the health of the people in the United States. However, in the 19th-century things were different. It was the time when print commercials were not regulated, and newspaper advertisements for patent drugs usually used overstated language. People were using medicines without knowing its actual usage. Now, the Food and Drug Administration maintains the health of the people by sponsoring safety, usefulness, and security of different goods including the pharmaceutical products. It supervises the approval and advertising of the medicines based on Federal Law.

# Works Cited

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