

Media statement- for immediate release
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Big Names Urge Government to Take On Big-Pharma

The Council of Medical Colleges in New Zealand (CMC) has launched [an open letter](#), calling on Minister Verrall to expressly prohibit Direct to Consumer Advertising of Prescription Medicines (DTCA-PM).

“For decades, doctors have been concerned that Direct to Consumer Advertising of Prescription Medicines presents a biased, overly optimistic picture of advertised medicines and prompts patients to request treatments they do not need,” says Dr Samantha Murton, Chair of CMC.

“We urge Minister Verrall to take on big-pharma and put the safety of patients ahead of pharmaceutical advertising.

So far, signatories to the open letter include Sir Ashley Bloomfield, former Labour PM Helen Clark, Prof Papaarangi Reid, Rob Campbell, international and national academic, unions, Consumer NZ, all seventeen New Zealand Medical Colleges, and many others.

“The Select Committee report on the Therapeutic Products Bill does not reflect the consensus view across doctors, across health, across academia and consumers – New Zealand doesn’t need to better regulate DTCA-PM, we need to ban it.

“The Council of Medical Colleges has absolutely no confidence that attempted central regulation, up against the enormous resources of the pharmaceutical industry, will be able to provide effective and timely control.

Labour Health Ministers and opposition spokespeople have repeatedly committed to addressing the harms DTCA-PM causes at the next opportunity to rectify the Medicines Act 1981. In 2004 former health minister Dame Annette King made moves to ban DTCA-PM altogether, but the idea fell by the wayside. In 2020 Opposition Spokesperson for Health, Dr Shane Reti called for DTCA-PM to be banned.

Dr Murton said “We estimate that banning DTCA-PM would free up our overstretched medical professionals by 48,000 hours a year – hours that are currently wasted dealing with queries that come up only because of this advertising, that would be much better spent helping sick Kiwis get better.

"We encourage anyone who wishes to add their support to do so by signing their name at www.cmc.org.nz/dtca-open-letter," Dr Murton said.

The Therapeutic Products Bill is expected to be read in Parliament in the upcoming week.

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About the Council of Medical Colleges in New Zealand:

CMC represents seventeen medical colleges who provide support to over 9000 medical practitioners working in a range of 34 specialties in the Aotearoa New Zealand health system. Medical colleges are educational bodies responsible for the training, examination and recertification of medical practitioners in specific medical disciplines.