

Canadian Women's Health Network
Madeline Boscoe RN DU
 Women's Health Clinic
 Winnipeg, Man.
Carolyn Shimmin BJ
 Canadian Women's Health Network
 Winnipeg, Man.

Competing interests: None declared.

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Advertisement

In a recent issue of *CMAJ* (2007;177:858), there is an advertisement for yet another testosterone product, Testim. This advertisement pictures a scantily clad young woman pressing her breasts against the windshield of a car and suggests the possible reactions of a patient receiving testosterone. Unfortunately, the ad's checklist doesn't include "offended." There is no suitable place for ads that demean women, and the professional journal of the Canadian Medical Association is the worst possible place for such an ad. *CMAJ* policy about advertisements in the journal needs to be brought into the current century, where sexism is no more acceptable than racism.

Stuart Holtby MD
 Director
 Northern Nights Sleep Disorder
 Centre
 Thunder Bay, Ont.

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I found the advertisement for Testim (*CMAJ* 2007;177:858) with the large-breasted woman pressed against the windshield of a car to be sexist and offensive. I found it hard to believe this ad was published in a magazine of *CMAJ*'s calibre and reputation. This ad looks like something that belongs in *Maxim* magazine, not *CMAJ*. I and the rest of the female physicians who read your journal deserve much better.

Maria Kang MD
 Vancouver, BC

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I was disappointed to see an advertisement in the Oct. 9 issue (*CMAJ* 2007;177:858) that explicitly objectifies a woman's body. The multiple choice option below the picture seems to suggest that men who fail to objectify a woman in such a way are suffering from low testosterone. I'm sure you will agree that respect for all genders is not pathologic.

I enjoy reading *CMAJ*, and I understand the necessity of pharmaceutical advertising revenue. However, in future, I hope *CMAJ* will consider the message of advertisements included in the print journal.

Jessica Hopkins MD BSc
 Community Medicine Resident
 McMaster University
 Hamilton, Ont.

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[Paladin Labs Inc. responds:]

I would like to assure *CMAJ* readers that our decision to run the Testim advertisement was carefully considered. The following points were important in our evaluation:

We believe that the Testim Advertisement is appropriate and relevant to the product category. Testim is indicated for testosterone replacement in hypogonadal men. The lack of a sexual response is among the chief com-

plaints of patients with low testosterone. Because patients respond differently to various delivery forms of testosterone replacement, our ad asks physicians to consider whether their patients are achieving an improvement in symptoms with their current medication. Our ad uses an iconic stock image of an attractive woman to pose that question in a way that attracts the attention of the reader. We believe that our advertisement makes good use of this cliché to communicate an important point about the effectiveness of Testim. The fact that this Advertisement is directed solely toward physicians also contributed to our decision. Physicians are an educated audience who are able to understand the message of this Advertisement in its appropriate context of optimizing testosterone therapy.

We did not feel that there was anything inherently degrading or inappropriate in the premise that an attractive woman may provoke sexual interest in a man with a normal testosterone level. This is a goal of therapy. Many patients seek help when declining sexual interest becomes a problem in their lives. When assessing whether a patient is responding to testosterone therapy, physicians will routinely ask their patients whether they have noticed an increase in their libido.

The advertising materials were reviewed by physicians who indicated that they found this approach to be clever, appropriate and reflective of the types of real issues that they face when treating patients with low testosterone. We recognize that advertising, particularly advertising dealing with sexual subject matter, can provoke strong responses. Nonetheless, we have received a great deal of positive feedback on this campaign, both for its appropriateness and for our willingness to break away from "traditional" pharmaceutical advertising.

Mark Beaudet BComm
 Vice President, Sales and Marketing
 Paladin Labs Inc.
 Montréal, Que.

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