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Social Marketing : Who's Right and Whose Right to Say So

Stephen S. Holden

Social marketing is :

... non-commercial marketing aimed at promoting a 'social good'

- vaccinate
- recycle
- breastfeed
- drive safely
- donate to charity
- use less electricity
- keep fit / lose weight
- drink less alcohol / quit smoking



Is social marketing ethical ?

The question is addressed here in a philosophical manner. That is to say :

- there are no data and
- there are no answers!

Social marketing's claim to being ethical is that it is for a 'social good', but...

- What is 'socially good' ?
- Who says so ?

E.g., vaccination marketing

Commercial marketers : CSL Biotherapies, sanofi pasteur, GlaxoSmithKline, Medimmune, Novartis, etc.



Public health agencies : Immunise Australia, Public Health Agency of Canada, CDC, WHO, etc.



Pro-Choice / Anti-vaccinators : Australian Vaccination Network (avn.org.au), ProCon.org, The Refusers (www.refusers.com), etc.



Who is more ethical ?

Commercial & social marketer promoting vaccinations : Both provide a 'social good'. This provides profit to the commercial marketer. What does it provide to the social marketer ?

Two social marketers deliver conflicting messages : Both for the 'social good'!

So, who's right, and whose right to say so ?

Ethical issues raised...

- **liberty** : freedom of choice denied, the 'greater good' dominates individual rights
- **ends & means** : marketing is about influence; do the ends (ever) justify the means ?
- **paternalism** : government dictates to the public as parents dictate to children – and they may be wrong
- **free riding** : non-vaccinators are protected by herd immunity, and the 'herd' benefits from vaccinators who experience an adverse reaction , i.e., they 'take one for the team'!

Vaccinate against myth-understanding



Social marketing is not inherently ethical (even though 'social good' is the objective).