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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

**CSL** 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](http://avn.org.au)), ProCon.org, The Refusers ([www.refusers.com](http://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).