



Advertising guidelines for members

Australian Orthopaedic Association

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Background

AOA expects all members to act in accordance with the *AOA Ethical Framework* in all aspects of their professional life, including the promotion of their practice via marketing and advertising in all forms of media, both traditional (print/radio/television) and via the Internet (social media channels of all descriptions).

AOA is first and foremost a scientific body of members whose training and daily practice of professional surgical skills are employed on the basis of proven science and validated evidence.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of all members to ensure that any promotional material produced under their name contains no claim that is inaccurate or unsupported by evidence. This extends to members who are part of a group practice, as this does not preclude them for being responsible for content on a group website or any other promotional material.

Members should note that it is necessary but not sufficient that all promotional material is compliant with Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) regulations. AHPRA rightly has patient safety as its principal focus, and it is the body with the regulatory powers to suspend, withdraw or otherwise restrict doctors' professional practice.

Members' promotional material should therefore both be AHPRA-compliant and conform with AOA [Code of Conduct](#) regulations, including the guidelines for advertising. In addition, members who use these guidelines should also be cognisant of the [AOANJRR policy regarding use of surgeon data](#) and qualified privilege.

Members should not engage in agreements or behaviors with health funds where preferential treatment of doctors may occur, or with companies promoting non-evidence based surgical techniques and behavior.

Guidelines

1. Understand and follow AHPRA regulations – Nigel Broughton has written an extensive article on this subject in [the Bulletin](#)
2. Apply the AOA [Ethical Framework](#)
3. Exercise great caution when engaging with journalists/reporters generating product for broadcast/publication to a wide, non-technical, general audience. It is highly unlikely that you will have editorial control or final approval of the finished product, even if you are paying for it (as an 'advertorial', for example).

Journalists will frame your comments in a way that maximises readability and reader interest, rather than ensuring scientific accuracy. Remember – you are ultimately responsible for everything produced in your name.



4. Make no claim to superior performance:

Common errors include (but are not limited to):

- This implant/device/technique is the newest, so it is the best
- I am using a robot, so the clinical result will be superior
- My anecdotal experience is equivalent to validated evidence
- I am an internationally renowned surgeon (excellence by assertion)
- I am the first/only person to perform this operation and or first/only person who can do this operation
- Optimistic assessments of possible future outcome presented as a guaranteed better outcome.
- Misuse of AOANJRR data

5. Avoid specific reference to the brand names of devices/implants you use.

You leave yourself open to the perception that you have an undeclared commercial relationship with the provider.

Equally, any commercial relationship you do have with a provider should be explicitly declared, both to the patient at the time of consultation, and in all your promotional material. This declaration is directly analogous to the declaration slide that is mandatory for all presenters at AOA educational meetings.

References:

[MTAA guidelines](#)

[Nigel Broughton Bulletin Article](#)

[Ethical Framework](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)