

News

Media displays Code ignorance

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Despite regular mainstream media reporting on the Medicines Australia (MA) Code of Conduct, most health reporters don't know who writes or enforces it, a survey of journalists specialising in health has found.

Almost sixty per cent of the 64 trade and consumer reporters and editors who took part in the "Reporting Medicine in Australia" survey conducted by public relations firm Ethical Strategies were not aware that MA is the governing body. Most picked the Therapeutic Goods Administration or the Australian Medical Association.

"This clearly identifies ongoing communications challenges for Medicines Australia," Ethical Strategies Managing Director John Morton told *Pharma in Focus*.

About the same number didn't know that the Code prohibits companies from promoting prescription drugs to the public or understand Code restrictions on drug information provided by companies.

Among reporters, "the net effect of the Code of Conduct is a state of confusion", Mr Morton said.

The survey also revealed a general aversion to pharma as a subject among consumer reporters.

Most of the consumer reporters surveyed said they take exception to getting different company press releases to those provided for trade reporters and tend to avoid pharma reporting for that reason.

"We will be making the whole report available to the industry, including Medicines Australia, in late April," said Mr Morton.

MA declined to comment until it had seen the full report.

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