Reviewer’s report

Title: Quality of claims, references and the presentation of risk results in medical journal advertising: a comparative study in Australia, Malaysia and the United States.

Version: 1 Date: 15 January 2010

Reviewer: Richard Kravitz

Reviewer’s report:

General comments:

Compulsory: I suggest making the international implications more explicit; “first study…in Malaysia” is not necessarily compelling. More information on the drug regulatory system in Malaysia would help the reader put things in context. Also, how is the system in Malaysia similar or different to that in other developing countries?

Discretionary: Major deficit is not checking whether the references, when present, actually supported the company’s claims. Similarly, did the references associated with vague or emotive claims legitimately support those claims? I realize that fulfilling this request would be quite time consuming. But if not done, this is a major limitation which should be elaborated upon in the Discussion.

Specific comments (all minor, compulsory)

P8 Number the objectives, and perhaps group them into major and minor (or sub-) objectives

P8 The journal sampling strategy (4 journals total) makes generalizing the results very difficult. In the U.S., one might see very different ads in the New England Journal of Medicine, American Family Physician, and the Journal of Clinical Oncology (for example). Also, it is not clear at all why MIMS was included, as this is not a journal. More information is needed on how advertising in MIMS is similar to (or different from ) advertising in a journal.

P12 “We found 829 claims…” In how many journals? (probably best to repeat this information here)

Tables 5-7 could probably be combined, using footnotes to connote the p-values.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a
statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests.