

New York State Society of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery

Truth in Advertising Legislation-Studies conducted by the AMA found that patients are undeniably confused about who provides their medical care. Results of a recently conducted survey reveal multiple examples of confusion by the public. 67% of respondents believed that a podiatrist was a medical doctor and 50% of the respondents believed that a psychologist was a medical doctor. A mere 69% of respondents believed that an ophthalmologist is a medical doctor. This confusion is exacerbated by advertisements, which fail to specify the title and type of license held by the health professional advertising his or her services.

Non-physicians who advertise their services are not required to specify what license they hold in advertisements. Moreover, even within medicine, physicians have trained in certain specialties and have achieved board certification by one of the 241 member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties or certification by the American Osteopathic Association.

Advertisements by health care professionals should assist the public in discerning the qualifications of a health care professional. Requiring advertisements to specify the title and license held by the health care professional, and where the professional is a physician can accomplish this; the advertisement should also specify the board certification attained by such physician. Clarity in advertising will enhance public information and decision-making on matters affecting the public's choice of health professional.

Legislation to assure Truth in Advertising by health professionals was introduced in both Houses of the Legislature in 2013. (S.5493, Griffo/A.7889, Stirpe) The bill, entitled the healthcare professional transparency act would assume appropriate identification of all licensed health care professionals in their one on one interaction with patients and in their advertisements to the public. Additionally, you will be invited to participate in a lobby day in Albany to assure that the voices of Dermatology are heard. Please stay tuned.