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SHOULD DRUG COMPANIES BE ALLOWED TO ADVERTISE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ON TV?

Word Generation - Unit 2.18

Focus Words

disclaimer | prescribe | potential | assume | rely

WEEKLY PASSAGE



In 1997, the law was changed to allow drug companies to advertise prescription drugs on television. Each year since there have been more of these ads. Television ads are required to provide **disclaimers** about the risks of each drug. Typically, such disclaimers are stated very quickly while good-looking actors distract the viewers. In 1991, drug companies spent \$55 million on advertising. By 2003, they were spending \$3 billion. The average number of prescriptions per person in the United States has also increased. In 1992, that average was 7.3. By 2000, it was 10.4.

Prescription drug advertisements have the **potential** to be helpful. They often provide useful information. They can lead people to talk to their doctors instead of ignoring a health problem. Yet this advertising also causes some problems. Many people who go to the doctor **assume** they need a certain drug that might not be right for them. Doctors can feel pressured to **prescribe** the medication that the patients ask for. This might mean that the patient takes an expensive drug when there are less costly alternatives available. Advertisements might also lead people to think that there is a pill that will solve any problem. This could make them **rely** on drugs instead of preventing health risks with good diets and regular exercise. Also, they might not know about the risks of taking the medication they see on television. There is not enough time in a typical disclaimer to tell consumers about all of the possible side effects of a drug. The United

States is one of only two countries in the world that allow drug companies to advertise directly to consumers

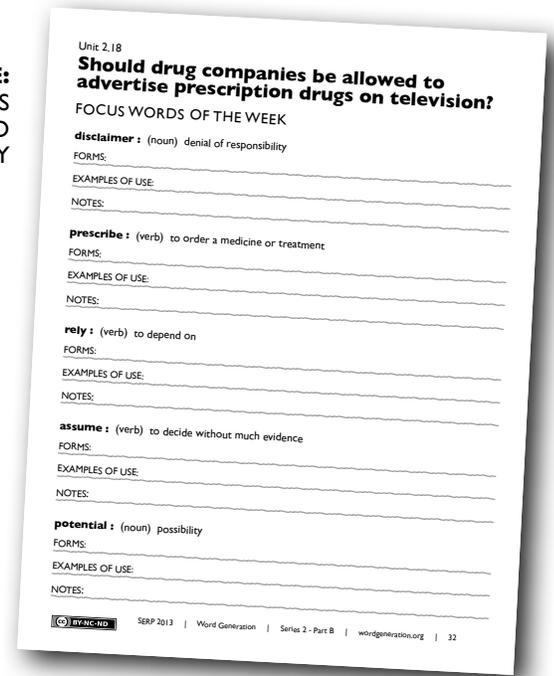
Do prescription drug advertisements help people more than they hurt? Or should drug companies be restricted from advertising on television?

TEACHER

Reading Comprehension/Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What is a disclaimer?
- ▶ How can prescription drug advertisements be helpful?
- ▶ How are they harmful?

PLEASE NOTE:
THE STUDENT VERSION OF THIS
PAGE IS FORMATTED
DIFFERENTLY



Unit 2.18

WORD CHART FOR TEACHERS

This chart is not in the student book. It is a resource for teachers to support students in the use of the focus words each week. Students are provided one page in each unit immediately following the weekly passage with a basic definition printed and space for taking notes.

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/Suffixes	
disclaimer	(n.) - denial of responsibility	disclaim (v.) disclaiming disclaimed disclaims disclaimers (pl.)	claim		acclaim
prescribe	(v.) - to order a medicine or treatment	prescribes prescribed prescribing		prescription nonprescription	scribe scribble script
potential	(n.) - possibility	potential (adj.) potentially	potent	impotent potency	
assume	(v.) - to decide without much evidence	assumes assumed assuming		assumability assumable assumably assumption unassuming	presume
rely	(v.) - to depend on	relies relied relying		reliance reliable unreliable	



Should drug companies be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television?

PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Are **prescription** drug advertisements dangerous? Consumers who **rely** on commercials for information about drugs may not get the whole story. These people may not understand the **disclaimers** that talk about side effects. They may ask their doctor to **prescribe** a **potentially** dangerous drug. Drug companies, however, **assume** that they have a right to market their products.

Option 1: In 2006, Americans spent \$216 billion on **prescription** drugs. This amount is about 10% of the country's total health care costs. Given this information, what are the country's total health care costs?

- A) \$2,160 million
- B) \$21.6 billion
- C) \$216 trillion
- D) \$2.16 trillion

Option 2: One study said that for every \$1 a company spends on consumer advertising, it will have an increase of \$2.20 in sales. In 2006, drug companies spent \$4.8 billion on advertising. If the study is correct, the \$4.8 billion spent on advertising should have caused an increase of how many dollars in sales?

- A) \$7 billion
- B) \$8.4 billion
- C) \$10.56 billion
- D) \$10.8 billion

Discussion Question: In 2006, drug companies spent \$4.8 billion on consumer **prescription** drug ads. In that same year, drug companies spent \$7.2 billion marketing drugs to doctors. If companies spend billions of dollars trying to convince doctors to use their products, can we **rely** on a doctor's advice? Or does advertising have the **potential** to affect a doctor's judgment? Can we **assume** that doctors' decisions are not changed by advertising? Why or why not? Should we demand a new kind of **disclaimer** in the doctor's office telling us which products have been advertised to our doctor?

Should drug companies be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television?



THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Mr. Seemy's students are studying familiar diseases in science class. "Some diseases are caused by bacteria, such as strep throat, tuberculosis, and food poisoning," says Mr. Seemy. "However, diseases such as the common cold, the flu, and chickenpox are caused by viruses, which are even smaller than bacteria."

"I had a cold for two weeks and my doctor wouldn't **prescribe** me any antibiotics," says Arjun. "She told me the cold was caused by a virus, and antibiotics wouldn't work on it, and that I just needed to rest and drink a lot of fluids. It was so annoying!"

"Many people **assume** that antibiotics can kill viruses, but they can't," says Mr. Seemy. "Antibiotics are only effective on bacterial infections. Your doctor was right, even if you didn't like it."

"I know what Arjun means though," says Tanisha. "When I'm sick all I want is to get better. But my uncle's a doctor and he says **relying** too much on antibiotics can create even stronger types of bacteria."

"Well, I know that bacteria and viruses aren't the same thing," says Arjun, "but really, how are they different?"

"Let's look at some information and see if you can sort different germs into the right categories for yourself," says Mr. Seemy.

→ The class goes over the following information on bacteria and viruses:

BACTERIA	VIRUSES
single-celled organisms	non-cellular
about 1000 nanometers in size (visible with light microscope)	20-400 nanometers in size (not visible with light microscope)
reproduce by dividing (binary fission)	reproduce by hijacking a host cell and turning it into a virus factory
need to eat and produce waste	neither eat nor produce waste
classified as living by all scientists	scientists debate whether viruses should be classified as living
antibiotics can interfere with life processes and kill bacteria	viruses do not have life processes that are affected by antibiotics

Now imagine you are a doctor. First, determine if each germ below is a bacteria or a virus. Then decide if you will prescribe antibiotics to fight each germ.

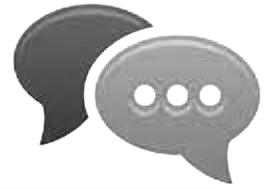
Salmonella <ul style="list-style-type: none"> single-celled reproduces using binary fission can be viewed under a light microscope 	Rhinovirus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> must use a host cell to reproduce cannot be seen using a light microscope not made of cells 	Influenza <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not consume food or produce waste about 100 nanometers in size
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Which of the three germs above are treatable with antibiotics? How do you know?

Salmonella is a bacterium (as shown by the characteristics listed), and can be treated with antibiotics. Rhinovirus and influenza are both viruses (as shown by the characteristics listed), and antibiotics have no effect on them.

Suppose a patient who had influenza (the flu) asked you to prescribe an antibiotic he had seen advertised. Explain to your patient whether or not antibiotics could help him, and why.

Influenza is a virus, and antibiotics will not help against it. Furthermore, taking antibiotics for flu is worse than useless, because excessive antibiotic use encourages the emergence of drug-resistant bacteria.



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DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Drug companies should be able to advertise on television. Advertisements let the public know what kind of medications are available.

B Drug companies should not be able to advertise on television. People might not fully understand appropriate uses and possible side effects.

C Drug companies could advertise as long as they give a complete description of what the medication can and cannot do.

D Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise because advertising increases the costs of medication.

E _____

TEACHER
Whatever the debate format, ask students to use academically productive talk when arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should be encouraged to take their own positions about the issue at hand.

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I believe that...

I agree with you, but...

You make a good point, but have you considered...

Can you show me evidence in the text that...

Should drug companies be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television?



WRITE ABOUT IT

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

disclaimer | prescribe | potential | assume | rely

TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation books as needed.