

Advertising complementary and alternative medicine and therapies

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Sitting alongside mainstream healthcare approaches, complementary therapies can help to support a person's sense of wellbeing and are popular choices for many. When advertising such services, however, practitioners should take care that they hold robust clinical evidence for any claims made about a therapy's efficacy. Here are a few tips to ensure everyone will be complimentary about your complementary therapy ads.

There are a wide range of complementary therapies, ranging from reiki to aromatherapy. Practitioners often make claims in ads about the general spiritual and emotional benefits which their treatments can bring. Claims about the relaxing nature of a therapy, its calming surroundings, or its ability to improve a sense of self are likely to be acceptable, as are descriptions about a therapy's history or foundations (provided this doesn't stay into objective claims of efficacy).

As with any other marketing claim, all efficacy claims about a complementary therapy must be supported with strong and robust evidence. Some therapies, such as osteopathy, are regulated by statute and have efficacy claims supported by high-level clinical evidence.

Other therapies, however, do not have the same evidence base and practitioners should, therefore, take care in the claims they make about these therapies. Claims in an ad for [acupuncture](#), for example, were found to be misleading as the advertiser did not hold evidence of a sufficient standard to support claims that it could help with issues such as fertility problems, headaches, anxiety, insomnia and musculoskeletal problems.

Some people might turn to complementary therapies when faced with health problems. It is important, however, that practitioners who are not suitably qualified do not refer to [serious medical conditions](#) in their ads, as this might discourage people from seeking medical supervision for essential treatment.

As an example, an ad for a ["Silent Healing" CD](#) which claimed to use a range of homeopathic techniques to treat recurrent malaria and Coxsackie B virus infections was found to discourage essential medical treatment from a suitably qualified health professional. Other examples of ailments that cannot usually be referred to in marketing communications include: arthritis, depression, diabetes, infertility and impotence.

Ring on [020 7492 2100](tel:02074922100), between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday for general advice about the CAP Code if you have any questions, or [send your specific queries](#), to the [CAP Copy Advice Team](#).

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