In Australia, pharmaceutical companies can provide information about the health condition for which they manufacture a prescription product – commonly referred to as disease awareness advertising. The pharmaceutical industry claims that this advertising provides education regarding health conditions and treatment options. However, public health and consumer advocates are concerned that it is an indirect method of advertising prescription medicines to consumers, and has the potential to inflate perceived prevalence of disease, create anxiety and unnecessary visits to doctors.

This research project includes an exploration of disease awareness advertising in Australian magazines via content analysis, and an examination of consumer responses to current and hypothetical disease advertisements via survey methodology.