

Letter to Stacy London...

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What Not to Wear BBC Worldwide Productions USA 251 Park Avenue South, 5th Floor New York, NY 10010	Editor at Large SHAPE Magazine American Media Inc. 4 New York Plaza New York, NY 10004	Co-founder and Stylist-In- Chief Style for Hire 1250 Broadway, 30th Floor New York, NY 10001
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Dear Stacy:

RE: What Not to Promote

As women and healthcare activists, we are gravely concerned about your recent links with AbbVie Corporation in its [Uncover Your Confidence Campaign](#) aimed at patients living with plaque psoriasis.

Your involvement could easily be interpreted as an endorsement of AbbVie's blockbuster drug Humira.

While we applaud your efforts to raise awareness of the challenges of coping with psoriasis, Humira is a drug with extremely serious risks.

By suppressing immune response, Humira can radically reduce resistance to diseases and may facilitate tumor growth. The FDA now requires it to carry "black box" warnings about the risks of tuberculosis, pneumonia, fatal fungal infections, neurological problems (including optic neuritis, which can lead to blindness), and rare but aggressive cancers.

That's why the FDA restricts Humira's use to conditions that are *chronic, moderate-to-severe, and that cannot be successfully treated with older, safer therapies*. While psoriasis can be a serious autoimmune disease with devastating effects, it usually does not warrant such drastic intervention.

Despite this, AbbVie has continually tried to promote Humira to patients with less serious conditions. In 2008, its parent, Abbott Laboratories, was ordered by the FDA to retract ads aimed at dermatologists that featured patients with less serious psoriasis and "[misleadingly suggest\[ed\] that Humira is safer than has been demonstrated.](#)" according to the FDA.

AbbVie is now running similar [ads](#) on cable TV, aimed not at medical specialists but at consumers. The ads feature fit, young people who are embarrassed when others catch sight of psoriasis lesions on their necks or arms, and promise that “[Clearer Skin Is Possible.](#)” Meanwhile, the “Uncover Your Confidence” campaign you are involved with directs viewers to AbbVie’s website psoriasis.com. There they can link up with “patient advocates” who are AbbVie employees, as well as search for the “right dermatologist” from an AbbVie-provided directory of doctors.

Recently, AbbVie has taken steps to hide the facts about Humira. It [filed suit in the European Union](#) to shut down a program that granted public access to the results of clinical trials conducted on new medicines. It has achieved interim success in blocking access to this crucially important information that has been hailed by [consumer groups and scientists](#) worldwide as a vitally needed counterbalance to drug company secrecy.

It’s no surprise that AbbVie would promote a drug that costs \$1,500 to \$2,500 per month and is key to the company’s bottom line, accounting for [half its sales and 70% of its profits](#).

It is less clear why you — a trusted advisor to millions — would risk being linked to the promotion of Humira?

AbbVie’s press releases say you have “[lived with psoriasis since the age of four.](#)” Most women will read that and assume you still have active disease. Looking at photos of you in short skirts and sleeveless dresses, anyone who hasn’t read your biography, and therefore knows that your psoriasis went into remission when you were seventeen (decades before Humira became available), may wonder if Humira is the secret to your success.

Stacy, you’ve always told women that accepting ourselves as we are is the first step to enhancing our self-confidence through style. That’s a great message. But to accept ourselves physically, we’ve got to know the truth about our medical conditions and the risks and benefits of potential treatments. The risk of devastating illnesses like tuberculosis, lymphoma, fungal infections, or blindness could more than offset the confidence produced by smooth skin.

For many women the offer of clear skin will be powerful, and they may not realize that taking Humira means rolling the dice with their health. It’s difficult to know what any of us could say to a woman who approached us someday with a terrible disease acquired from taking Humira based on a belief that we had recommended it.

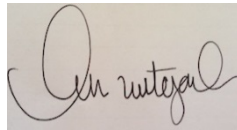
We know you care about women and that you more than anyone know about the dilemmas psoriasis sufferers face. It would be a shame if AbbVie were able to exploit the trust that women have in you. You are in a unique position to restore some balance to the debate – perhaps even to call on AbbVie to drop its fight in the European courts to prevent the public from learning about Humira’s risks.

If you think we can help you, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Johanna Ryan



Kim Witczak

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