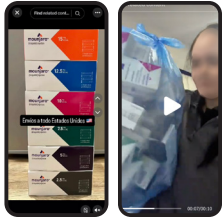




Weight loss promotions are out of hand on social media, and it's endangering patients

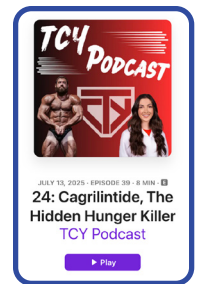
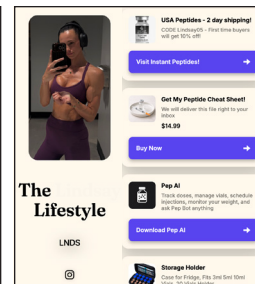


“DIRECT TO CONSUMER” SOCIAL MEDIA SALES

People are using social media platforms to sell what look like approved weight loss products directly to viewers, entirely outside of regulation and without appropriate medical oversight. Their buyers have no way to know what they are getting. Even if they received genuine medicine, there's no indication of side effects and no one to turn to if they run into health issues.

INFLUENCERS PUSHING UNAPPROVED PRODUCTS

Influencers promote unapproved medicines or peptides—usually as a quick route to perfect health or easy weight loss—regardless of whether the products are truly safe or effective. If there's a platform where you can do this, you'll find them there, often with a link to a source in their bio.



FAKE, STOLEN, OR ILL-ADVISED MEDICAL ENDORSEMENTS

A special category of influencer is the medical professional trading on their authority to guide users to compounded medicine or “peptides” marketed as FDA-approved equivalents, often without disclosing financial incentives. We've also seen reporting on [deep fakes of doctors in an AI-generated endorsements](#), and cases where doctors' videos have been reposted on channels run by vendors selling illegal medical products.

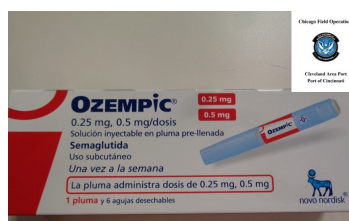
Never take medicine based on the advice of a physician you don't have a medical relationship with.



FAKE GENERICS AND OTHER FALSE EQUIVALENTS

Generic medicines are tightly regulated, and not all medicines have legal generics. Social media hucksters have falsely advertised gray market drugs as generic or generic-equivalent. Telehealth companies selling unapproved compounded drugs often label them as the “same active ingredient as Ozempic.” The FDA is clear that medicines made outside of U.S. regulations cannot be considered the same ingredient.

ILLEGAL PHARMACY DISPENSING



There are legal versions of weight loss medicines made for other countries, but perfect-looking fakes are easy to make. A foreign pharmacy willing to break U.S. laws to send you medicine is unlikely to worry about going to jail for sending you a counterfeit. You're much safer using the newly lowered costs of the injectable and pill forms from Novo Nordisk and Lilly, and the new patient discounts that are available.

Improving Safety in Weight Loss Product Promotions



The current advertising environment is facilitating dangerous medicine sales, but policy-makers, social media platforms, and individuals can make changes to protect the public

THE FDA NEEDS RESOURCES FOR THIS WORK

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has intercepted counterfeit weight loss medicines and unapproved weight loss treatments; gone after vendors selling unsafe research chemicals for human use, and physicians inappropriately giving patients unapproved medicines; and rebuked telemedicine companies for deceptive marketing tactics.

The FDA has asked for expanded authority to destroy dangerous medical products when they enter the U.S. and the power to declare illegally marketed compounded medicines misbranded. **Congress should ensure the FDA has these tools and enough funding so that they can do their job.**

OTHER AGENCIES ALSO HAVE A ROLE

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforces the nation's "truth-in-advertising" laws, and it has taken legal action against [companies](#) that used [deceptive](#) weight loss [advertising](#) to attract consumers. Individuals charged with selling dangerous weight loss drugs and "research chemicals" via social media are also being [prosecuted](#) in [federal courts](#). **Continuing strong enforcement of statutes against deceptive marketing of these drugs may discourage future misconduct.**

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS CAN DO MORE

Social media platforms should proactively identify misleading advertisements and investigate accounts endorsing unapproved drugs. Accounts should not be permitted to direct viewers to affiliate stores selling these products. Influencers who sidestep platform restrictions by giving instructions for taking "ratatouillie" instead of "retatrutide" should not be given a pass when they're clearly instructing users in illegal prescription drug taking. This is doubly true for influencers who link their accounts to stores selling U.S. residents products in violation of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. **Social media companies should remove these accounts and prevent new ones.**



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

While government and corporate actors can take on systemic change, individuals can also take action by reporting deceptive and illegal marketing of weight loss products to social media platforms [and the FTC](#), and looking out for friends and family who may be taken in by these promotions.

KEEP TRACK OF THIS ISSUE WITH PSM AT WWW.SAFEMEDICINES.ORG/WEIGHT-LOSS-ON-SOCIAL-MEDIA