

COMMENTARY

The panty hose caper

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Magazines which advertise cigarettes often omit from stories on health any information on the harmful effects of smoking.^{1,2} Publishers apparently fear that cigarette companies will buy fewer ads in their magazines if they report on the link between smoking and disease. This omission of information on smoking-related disease is a type of self-censorship.

Self-censorship may be seen not only in the editorial policy of magazines, but in marketing for other consumer goods. We present an example of self-censorship in marketing for women's hosiery.

Recently, some Hanes hosiery products have included a package insert "Created by *Glamour* and funded by Hanes Hosiery", as part of a national breast-health programme (see figure). The insert gives instruction in how to perform breast self-examination. It also advises patrons to eat more fruit and vegetables, reduce fat in the diet, exercise regularly, have an annual clinical breast examination, and obtain a mammogram when indicated. No advice is given to stop smoking or not to start smoking.

Hanes and *Glamour* magazine deliver a worthwhile health message on breast-health and "other things you can do for good health". If the insert were on a single topic (breast-health), the omission of a health warning on smoking would be more understandable and perhaps reasonable. However, by failing to mention smoking in the broad range of topics covered (low-fat diet, fruit and vegetables, beans and whole grains, exercise, mammography), they are self-censoring. *Glamour* publishes cigarette ads, conducts biased surveys on "smokers' rights", and avoids reporting on the link between smoking and disease.³⁻⁵ *Glamour* denies that cigarette advertising influences their health coverage.⁶

Not smoking is far more effective in preventing death from cancer than breast self-examination, a low-fat diet, or exercise. The importance of the message to avoid smoking is

underscored as lung cancer annually kills more US women than breast cancer. Early detection of breast cancer can reduce mortality by 30%,⁷ while not smoking will prevent 87% of lung cancers from ever developing.⁸

At the bottom of the package insert appear the emblems of collaborating agencies: the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the American Health Foundation (AHF). By allowing the use of their emblems, these agencies give explicit approval to these health messages and implicit approval to the omission of advice about not smoking. It would be regrettable if these agencies consciously approved of this omission.

Also implicit in this message to the consumer is the notion that Hanes, *Glamour*, the NCI, and AHF are joined to improve the health of the public. Hanes and *Glamour* receive a boost to their public image, appearing as responsible corporate citizens interested in the health of their consumers. At the same time, they are safeguarding their income from tobacco advertisers through this act of self-censorship.

Health advocates must be alert for other examples of self-censorship and should expose this seamy side of product marketing.

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The opinions expressed herein
are those of the authors and
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Good looks start with good health...

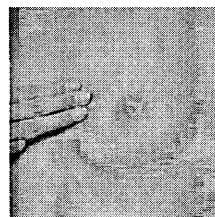
What you do today and throughout the year can make a difference in your future—that's the message of Glamour/Hanes Hand in Hand, a national breast-health program. For example, by examining your breasts once a month, you can learn what is normal for your breasts and how they change from time to time.*



1. Standing before a mirror, inspect both breasts for anything unusual—a discharge from the nipples; an inverted nipple; puckering, dimpling or scaling of the skin; any change in the shape or contour of your breasts. Still looking in the mirror, repeat with your hands clasped behind your head and with hands pressed on hips.



2. Examining breasts while in the shower or with powder or lotion reveals changes easily. Raise your left arm. Press the flat part of three or four fingers of your right hand in small circles on your left breast. Move fingers in circles slowly around the entire breast. If you prefer, move your fingers up and down in vertical lines.



3. Start examining your breasts at the outer edge; work toward the nipple, covering the entire breast, including the underarm area and up to the collarbone. Next, raise your right arm and examine your right breast with your left hand. Repeat the exam lying down. If you find anything unusual, contact your doctor right away.

*The best time is two to three days after the end of your menstrual period. If you aren't menstruating, pick an easy-to-remember date, such as the first of the month. If you are taking hormones, talk to your doctor about when to examine your breasts.

**GLAMOUR HANES
HAND-HAND**

Created by Glamour and funded by Hanes Hosiery



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Other things you can do for good health:

Eat more fruits and vegetables, beans and whole grains.

Reduce the fat in your diet.

Exercise regularly.

Have a health professional examine your breasts once a year.

Ask your health professional how to examine your breasts yourself. Also ask when you should have a mammogram. Guidelines for most women (follow your doctor's specific recommendations): Ages 40-49, every 1-2 years; age 50 and over, annually.

For more information, call the Cancer Information Service, 1-800-4-CANCER U.S.A. ONLY