

The dependency of some businesses on these government payments indicates the failure of Australian pharmacies to aggressively market themselves as health care/promotion centres (as the USA have done) rather than mere dispensaries. Innovations in marketing seem to be greatly lacking in the industry, which is comprised of numerous small dispensary type stores or slightly larger stores which are usually members of co-operative buying groups. There are some 5,500 retail pharmacies in Australia.

Companies considering entering the HHC market in Australia should be prepared to spend time educating pharmacy employees about their products and applications, along with convincing pharmacy owners to focus part of their store space and marketing to promote Home Health Care and health promotion products, ie. self testing kits, dressings, etc.

C. Home Testing Kits

With the Government's attention being directed towards health promotion, it would seem quite natural to assume that home testing kits for use in the monitoring of certain health conditions, ie. blood pressure; bowel cancer; pregnancy, would be becoming increasingly popular with the public.

Apart from pregnancy testing kits, it seems that two major obstacles face the promotion of these products, and they have failed to meet with general acceptance. In North America, health insurance/medical funds will reimburse members for the purchase of many home health care items. People will then buy a product and home test knowing that they can claim it from their Health fund.

However, in Australia, private insurance claims can be submitted, but will go to a review committee, and each item will be judged on its merit, ie. whether for that item in that instance is a legitimate claim. It is easier, therefore, to go to the Doctor, because that visit is refundable, as are pathology costs for tests the Doctor carries out. There is no financial incentive to use home testing.

The second problem lies with product promotion - advertising is subject to the restrictions applied by the Health and Therapeutic goods act, therefore written or spoken promotion of these goods can only be in the form of editorials and can not be as paid advertisements. This, of course, limits the promotion of products to recommendation from Doctors, who in turn may see the use of these products as chiselling away at their business.

Needless to say, both of these factors restrict the potential of sales for home testing products.