California district attorney announces settlement in Truth in Advertising case

District Attorney Dan Dow of the county of San Luis Obispo has reached a settlement with a local nurse practitioner who earned a doctorate degree in nursing practice and began referring to herself on her professional website and social media accounts as “Doctor.”

According to a press release on the settlement, “While in most instances [the nurse practitioner] indicated that she was a nurse practitioner, she failed to advise the public that she was not a medical doctor and failed to identify her supervising physician.”

According to research conducted in alignment with the AMA’s Truth in Advertising campaign, patients increasingly believe that they are meeting with a physician when they are not, with 19% of survey respondents believing that a nurse practitioner is a medical doctor. The AMA believes that patients deserve clarity and transparency in their health care, which involves being able to easily identify who is a physician.

“We want all health care professionals to clearly display their education and licensure so that patients know who is providing their care,” said District Attorney Dow. “All forms of professional medical services advertising, including websites and social media accounts, must be free of deceptive or misleading information and must clearly identify the professional license held by the advertiser. Providing patients upfront with the proper title of our health care professionals aids consumers in making a more informed decision about their health care.”

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