

DOES FIRST IN CLASS MEAN FIRST IN MIND?

Drugs with unique benefits offer a wealth of opportunities for marketers to connect with physicians. But, as **Charlene Prounis** finds out, the emotion is too often missing.

It's every marketer's dream: the launch of a new brand that's first in its class. There's big news to announce — no struggling with “me-too” claims, no market clutter to break through. Instead, the marketer has a novel drug with a one-of-a-kind profile, offering the opportunity to create ad campaigns that are relevant, memorable and capable of establishing product differentiation and an emotional connection.

But do these ads seize this opportunity? Do they actually forge emotional connections with doctors, who then write prescriptions?

In short, are pharmaceutical marketers as successful as their consumer cousins — such as Apple with iPod — when it comes to launching something new and striking an emotional appeal?

To find out, we analyzed nearly two dozen ads for first-in-class drugs that were launched over the last few years. The brands chosen were all breakthrough products — each with billions of dollars at stake, no competition in sight and genuine, sometimes miraculous, news to announce. So novel, in fact, were some of these drugs that they actually created a market with the potential for blockbuster sales.

While the ads were all creatively different, some were similar in their overall approach. Reviewing them, we found that all the ads — regardless of the disease category — employed one of four basic approaches, focusing on clinical advantages (42 percent), mode of action with a clinical focus (31 percent), emotional benefit (17 percent) or empowerment (9 percent).

Although every ad fell into one of these categories, some of the best ads combined the clinical and action-oriented approach, and all — regardless of which approach they adopted — included some clinical benefits to demonstrate their products' advantages. On the other hand, relatively few of the ads relied on the emotional appeal or the promise of empowerment. This is not surprising, since doctors, as we should all know, love science. They love the acquisition of medical knowledge and are more likely to read material that promises to aid in its pursuit.

Nevertheless, if we compare these ads — all for products that broke new ground — to their counterparts on the consumer side, we find that they are often in need of a stronger connection between the brand and the physician. Products such as Coke and Dove engender loyalty and trust. Shouldn't prescription drugs, capable of prolonging life, do the same?

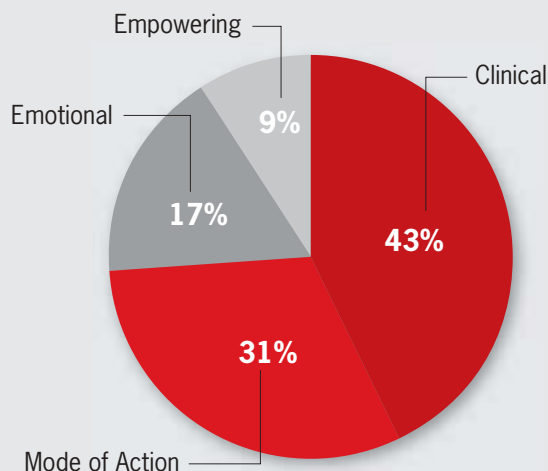
Because their first-in-class status instantly differentiates these products, providing an intrinsic value, the effort to go beyond the product's newness may not be as aggressive as it could be. If the goal of these ads is to differentiate the product, then newness is enough. If the goal is to establish the product's relevance, then insight into the physician's issues or needs is essential. Insight drives relevance, and lasting relevance drives loyalty and trust.

Loyalty and trust are the kinds of emotional bonds that strong brands create. They're the heart and soul of good marketing, driving sales and making sure that customers keep coming back. Long after they've lost their first-in-class status, the most successful consumer brands continue to make their customers feel confident about their products and secure about their purchases. If we want medical advertising to work — to make an impression that will last beyond the first hint of competition — then we need to establish a real connection with the physician.

As marketers, we can afford to learn a great deal from our consumer counterparts. The bottom line is that we must strive for the connections — the bonds that link physicians to our brands — and dare to be different.

Charlene Prounis is chief marketing officer of Corbett Accel Healthcare Group. Orin Kimball, executive creative director, and Camille DeSantis, group creative director, contributed to this article.

First-in-class drug ad approaches
35 total evaluated



I. The clinical approach



Positioning Celebrex as a “scientific breakthrough,” this launch ad links the arthritis drug to safety, flexibility and relief — while the visual suggests freedom from pain. Pfizer’s Celebrex is now the leading arthritis medication.

CLINICAL ADS are those that make a rational appeal to the physician, zeroing in on the drug’s medical advantages, such as safety, efficacy and dosing. The ads — which are generally multiple-page units — include charts and illustrations to reinforce their points. Doctors love these kinds of data and want to know what the drug can do. With a first-in-class product, this is very important and perhaps even enough to generate involvement. One question that could be raised, however, is whether the ad could strive for the emotional connection, which is the ultimate builder of brand loyalty.

Celebrex (celecoxib)

“Powerful relief, safely delivered” is the headline on this ad launching Celebrex, “the first agent to target only COX-2.” The product, billed as “a scientific breakthrough for the treatment of both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis,” is linked to safety (fewer GI complications) plus flexibility and relief. The visual — a figure virtually leaping off the page — echoes the copy by suggesting freedom from painful joints without the risk of ulcers.



Erbix was introduced earlier this year by ImClone and Bristol-Myers Squibb as a first-of-its-kind antibody for the treatment of colorectal cancer. A bridge forms the visual metaphor, while body copy remains clinical throughout.

Erbix (cetuximab)

Connecting the supports on a bridge is the visual metaphor for this colorectal cancer treatment, which has been proven effective in patients who cannot tolerate certain kinds of chemotherapy. The ad introduces Erbix as “the first and only IgG1 monoclonal antibody that binds specifically to the EGF Receptor on both normal and tumor cells.” The completed bridge is repeated on every page, with an elderly couple shown strolling across its ramparts. The copy, however, is strictly clinical.

2. The mode-of-action approach

MODE-OF-ACTION ads focus on how a product works — distinctive chemistry, a new delivery method, the ability to block receptors or speed up activity, for example. Ads like these generally begin by announcing the mode of action and then proceeding to tout the drug's clinical advantages.

Rezulin (troglitazone)

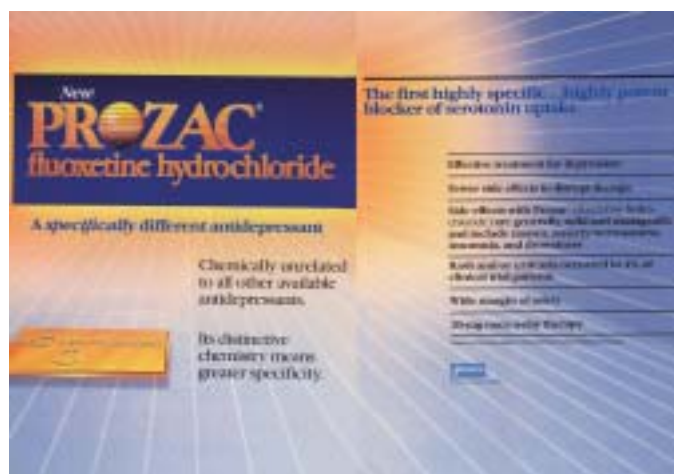
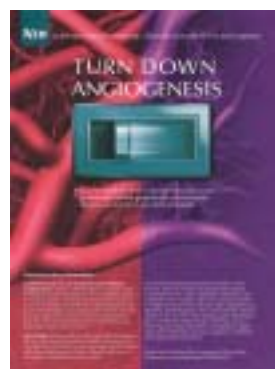
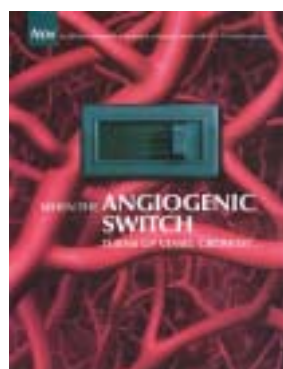
Rezulin, once head of the TZD class for the treatment of Type II diabetes, is now off the market. The launch ad — featuring a large padlock and the headline “Unlock insulin resistance” — serves as a call to action and explains that the product “directly reduces insulin resistance through a unique nuclear mechanism.” As the first product to achieve this, Rezulin is depicted in both the copy and the visuals as the “key to control” for Type II diabetes patients on insulin.

Avastin (bevacizumab)

In this ad, a light switch — called the “Angiogenic Switch” — is used to portray the effectiveness of the drug as a first-line treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer. The switch, in this case, indicates both the mode of action — the ability to switch off vessel growth — and the benefit of extending survival.

Prozac (fluoxetine hydrochloride)

Announcing itself as “a specifically different antidepressant — chemically unrelated to all other available antidepressants,” Prozac burst on the scene with the news that serotonin uptake could be modulated. The chemical action made the drug far more effective — and with fewer side effects — than any of its predecessors. In this launch ad, chemical diagrams illustrate the mechanical action of the drug.



A launch ad for Rezulin, a diabetes drug no longer on the market, features a padlock and describes the treatment as a “key” to insulin control. Genentech colorectal cancer drug Avastin debuts with an “angiogenic switch,” while details on Eli Lilly blockbuster Prozac are described using diagrams.

3. The emotional approach

THESE ADS HIGHLIGHT human emotion, illustrating a drug's ability to create a deeper connection with the physician while implying the benefits of happiness and well-being. They often have a strong copy component that attempts to forge an emotional bond and make the physician-reader sit up and take notice.

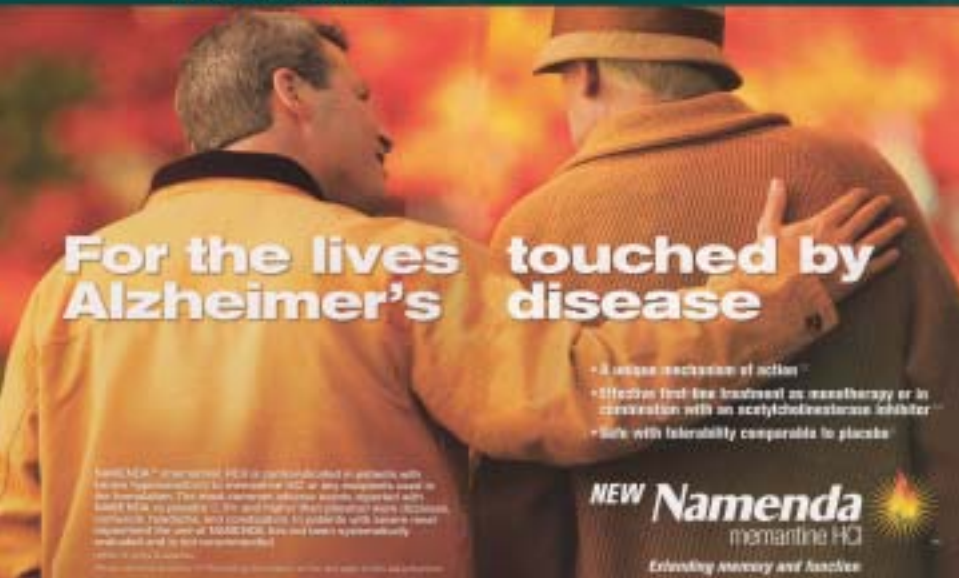
Namenda (memantine HCl)

The human factor is paramount in this ad, showing an older man being embraced by his son. "Touched by Alzheimer's Disease" is the double-entendre headline, suggesting both a disease that touches lives and a drug that inhibits cognitive decline. The emphasis is on the son's ability to reach out to his father and relate to him, rather than on the drug's action.

Strattera (atomoxetine HCl)

Another intimate photo — indicating the all-day coverage of a new drug for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) — features a happy child enjoying quality time with family. "Having fun shouldn't end when the day does" reads the headline, proclaiming the first FDA-approved nonstimulant medication for this common childhood condition.

INTRODUCING the first and only NMDA-receptor antagonist for the treatment of moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease



For the lives touched by Alzheimer's disease

- A unique mechanism of action
- Effective first-line treatment as monotherapy or in combination with an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor
- Safe with tolerability comparable to placebo

NEW Namenda
memantine HCl
Extending memory and function

Namenda (memantine HCl) is indicated for patients with moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease. It is not recommended for use in patients with severe renal impairment. The most common adverse events reported with Namenda are dizziness, headache, and constipation. In patients with severe renal impairment, the use of Namenda should be limited to 10 mg per day. Namenda should be used with caution in patients with a history of seizures. Please see important information about Namenda on the inside back cover of this advertisement.

Having fun shouldn't end when the day does.



Introducing a new ADHD treatment that offers continuous symptom relief.
Strattera is the first FDA-approved nonstimulant, noncontrolled medication for ADHD.
It provides all-day coverage that extends over long-term and short-term use of the day parts of the day.

Strattera (atomoxetine HCl) is indicated for the treatment of ADHD in children and adolescents. It is not recommended for use in patients with a history of seizures. Please see important information about Strattera on the inside back cover of this advertisement.

strattera
atomoxetine HCl

Lilly

ANNOUNCING

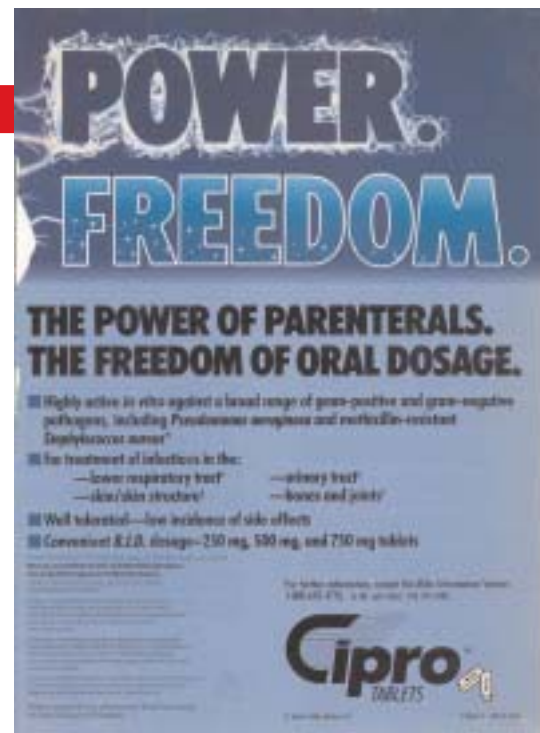
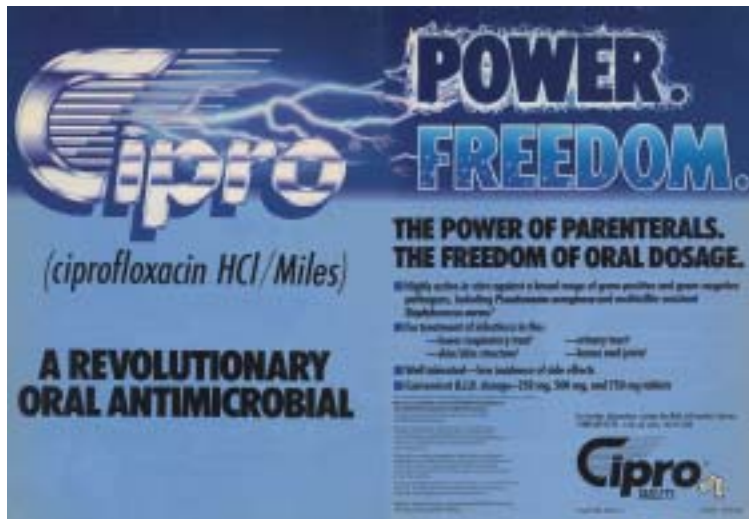
A unique therapeutic advance in Alzheimer's disease...



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Namenda, a "unique" Alzheimer's drug from Forest Pharmaceuticals, hits the market with a human touch and the tagline, "Extending memory and function." Eli Lilly's Strattera, the first FDA-approved nonstimulant medication for ADHD, also portrays a quiet moment with family.

4. The empowering approach



EMPOWERING ADS are literally those that offer power — the power to save lives, promise hope, control outcomes — sometimes fulfilling a doctor's deepest and most idealistic dreams. The ability to do more, however, can be difficult to communicate.

Cipro (ciprofloxacin HCl)

Promising power and freedom for the physician, this Cipro ad, launched in 1988, describes a powerful anti-infective treatment. In addition to having the power to defeat a broad range of pathogens, including staph infections, the drug offers the freedom of oral administration and a low incidence of side effects.

Mevacor (lovastatin, MSD)

"Now you can act decisively against elevated cholesterol" is the headline on this ad, which promises the power of a cholesterol-lowering treatment with few side effects. A simple graph reveals the speedy response to the drug, while copy confirms the extent of its efficacy within just two weeks.



Bayer launched Cipro in 1988 with a focus on power and the freedom of oral administration. Merck's Mevacor entered the cholesterol-lowering market with an easy-to-understand graph that illustrates the drug's "decisive action" and quick response.

