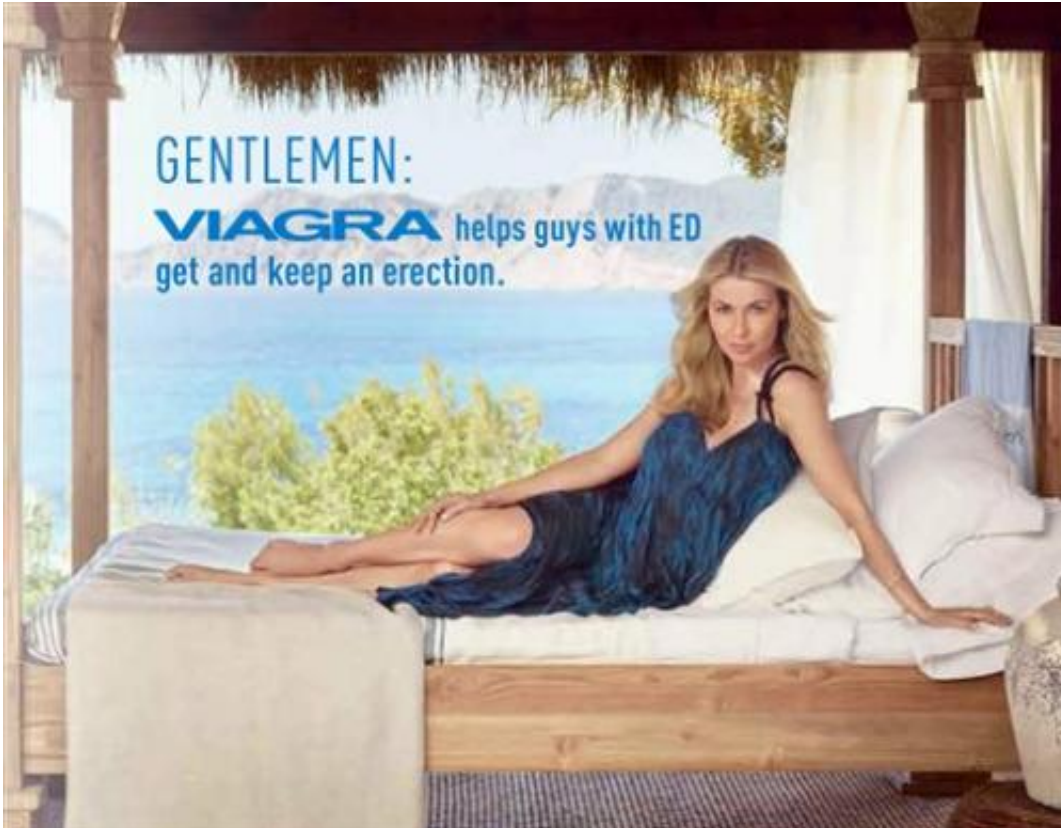


Viagra ads target women for first time

September 30 2014, by Linda A. Johnson



This image provided by Pfizer Inc. shows a new print ad for Viagra, the world's top-selling erectile dysfunction drug. Executives at New York-based Pfizer hope the new ad campaign launching Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2014, which includes print ads in publications and a new 60-second television commercial, will nudge women to broach the subject with their mates. (AP Photo/Pfizer Inc.)

The maker of the world's top-selling erectile dysfunction drug on Tuesday will begin airing the first Viagra TV commercial in America

that targets the less-obvious sufferers of the sexual condition: women.

In the new 60-second ad, a middle-aged woman reclining on a bed in a tropical setting addresses the problems couples encounter when a man is impotent.

"So guys, it's just you and your honey. The setting is perfect. But then [erectile dysfunction](#) happens again," she says before encouraging men to ask their doctor about Viagra. "Plenty of guys have this issue—not just getting an erection, but keeping it."

Having a woman speak directly to men about impotence is a unique strategy for Pfizer Inc. The world's second-biggest drugmaker is looking for ways to boost sales of Viagra, Pfizer's No. 6 seller, at a time when it is encountering new competition.

Viagra has faced competition from cheaper generic versions in Europe since its patent expired there 15 months ago. Sales fell 8 percent last year, to \$1.9 billion. And in three years, Viagra will get [generic competition](#) in the U.S., where it costs about \$35 a pill. Meanwhile, new competitor Stendra just got approved.

Patents give a drug a monopoly, generally for 20 years. But when those patents expire, cheaper generic versions flood the market, often wiping out most of the brand-name drug's sales within a year.

Pfizer has seen generic competition for several of its other drugs cut revenue by billions, so it is hoping to stem the revenue losses for Viagra.

The market for ED drugs is big. About half of men over 40 suffer from ED, occasionally or always, yet only 10 percent take medicine regularly, said Dr. Irwin Goldstein, who directs the San Diego Sexual Medicine center and has researched sexual disorders for decades.

Having a woman in ads makes sense because women often are more upset by ED than their man, he said. They often lose interest in sex and even find it painful, said Goldstein, who has done patient testing of multiple ED pills and received consulting fees from their makers.

He said men generally dislike going to doctors, and when older ones do, they often linger as the doctor finishes, shifting from one foot to the other in what doctors call "the Viagra shuffle." Doctors then ask if the man wants Viagra, he said.

Executives at New York-based Pfizer hope the new ad campaign, which includes print ads in publications such as Esquire and Time, will nudge women to broach the subject with their mates. In the ad, the actress also uses the word "erection," instead of the industry euphemism, "ED."

Pfizer's marketing chief, Vic Clavelli, told The Associated Press that the company is trying to take a more direct approach in ads, unlike past ones "built around very subtle innuendo."

Until now, [women](#) have been absent or played background roles in the many ads for ED drugs since the first, Viagra, was launched in 1998. Viagra gave men an alternative to penile suppositories, surgery and injections, and 50 million worldwide have since taken it.

Ads for rival Cialis have featured couples getting frisky during everyday activities, then lounging in his-and-hers bathtubs. Viagra ads typically show middle-aged men doing things such as construction work and deep-sea fishing.

"It's definitely a unique strategy that could work," said Edward Jones health care analyst Ashtyn Evans. "The more people they can get loyal to their brand, the better."

More information: Viagra commercial:
www.viagra.com/viagra-tv-commercial.aspx

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Citation: Viagra ads target women for first time (2014, September 30) retrieved 20 March 2024
from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-viagra-ads-women.html>

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