



Media Release

30 June 2016

3D broadcast of investigation into Gardasil vaccine did not breach broadcasting standards

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has not upheld a complaint about a 3D investigation broadcast in November last year. The item featured the stories of several girls who believed they had suffered serious health problems after being injected with the cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil. The programme also reported on the as-yet-unexplained sudden deaths of two girls who had received the Gardasil vaccination.

The maker of Gardasil, Seqirus (NZ) Ltd, complained that the item misleadingly gave the impression that Gardasil was unsafe and alarmed and deceived the public when there was no evidential basis for doing so.

However, the BSA found that '[t]he tone of the programme was not alarmist, but rather exploratory. It posed the question whether Gardasil might be unsafe for some girls, with reference to the experiences of the girls featured.'

The BSA considered the public interest was served by the 3D investigation, which was done in a responsible and balanced way. The programme presented viewers with adequate information on both sides, and addressed the significant medical evidence which disputed that Gardasil was unsafe.

In reaching its decision, the BSA emphasised the high public interest value of the broadcast, in particular in giving a platform for minority voices to be heard.

'The Gardasil vaccination programme in schools is publicly funded. It is a vital function of the media, when questions are raised about an aspect of the public health system, to investigate these issues and robustly scrutinise the system,' the BSA said.

'It was legitimate for 3D to investigate the health issues being experienced by the young New Zealand girls interviewed, who had a right to have their stories told.

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...The programme allowed minority views to be heard which otherwise may not have been afforded such a platform.'

The BSA found overall that the story was well-reported, was measured in its presentation and gave viewers a range of information, which enabled them to make up their own minds about the vaccine.

ENDS

For more information contact Nicole Hickman on 027 313 0179.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full decision is available at <http://bsa.govt.nz/decisions/latest>.

The programme was broadcast on 9 November 2015. The decision was made under the previous Free-to-Air Television Code of Broadcasting Practice. The new Codebook has been in force since 1 April 2016 and is available at <http://bsa.govt.nz/standards/overview>.

ABOUT THE BROADCASTING STANDARDS AUTHORITY

The Broadcasting Standards Authority is an independent body that oversees the broadcasting standards regime in New Zealand. We do this by determining complaints that broadcasts have breached standards, by doing research and also by providing information about broadcasting standards.

The Authority members who determined this complaint were Peter Radich (Chair), Leigh Pearson, Te Rau Kupenga and Paula Rose.

For more information see our website: www.bsa.govt.nz.