Pfizer CEO Hit by UK Pharma Marketing Regulator Over 'Misleading' Claims on COVID Vaccine for Kids

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla is in hot water for "misleading" and "overly promotional" claims he made during a BBC interview late last year about the company's then-unapproved COVID vaccine for kids.

A code of practice panel convened by the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority (PMCPA) – Britain's pharmaceutical marketing regulator – found that Pfizer breached the code by misleading the public about its COVID-19 vaccine, making unsubstantiated claims and by failing to present information in a factual and balanced way, The Telegraph reported.

In an earlier finding, PMCPA also found that Pfizer brought discredit to the industry, encouraged irrational use of a medicine and failed to maintain high standards.

In a Dec. 2, 2021, interview with the BBC, Bourla said, "there is no doubt in my mind that the benefits, completely, are in favor of" vaccinating kids ages 5 to 11 against COVID.

"COVID in schools is thriving […] This is disturbing, significantly, the educational system, and there are kids that will have severe symptoms," he added.

A complaint filed with PMCPA by UsForThem — a UK parent campaign group created to promote the difficulty of children during the pandemic — alleged Bourla's remarks about the children's vaccine were "disgracefully misleading" and "extremely promotional in nature," arguing that it breached several clauses of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's (ABPI) code of practice.

"There is simply no evidence that healthy schoolchildren in the UK are at significant risk from the SARS-CoV-2 virus and to imply that they are is disgracefully misleading," they said.

Bourla statements were made before the shot had received approval for kids, meaning anything "deemed promotional about the vaccine" could be seen as a breach of the UK's strict drug marketing rules.

It wasn't until February 2022 that the UK government determined children ages 5 to 11 could receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine — a decision it also left in the hands of parents.

According to The Telegraph, Pfizer appealed against the PMCPA rulings, and the watchdog overturned most of the severe breaches.

The way this news has come out is unusual, Fierce Pharma reported. The PMCPA is a self-regulatory body set up by the pharmaceutical industry that can enact strict punishments if companies breach its marketing rules. In serious cases,

findings are published in medical journals.

Cases are made public and uploaded to PMCPA's website, but the Pfizer case titled "AUTH/3591/12/21 A Complaint of Behalf of UsForThem v Pfizer" has not yet been made public.