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Opinion leaders: A rising marketing tool to promote new medicines

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Opinion Leaders (OLs) are tools for promoting new medicines that pharmaceutical industry has adopted recently. The literature related to OLs is increasing worldwide, but at the same time this is revealing major confusion about the concept of OLs. For this reason, we decided to clarify this concept using the primary sociological definition of OLs and clarifying the different roles that the OLs can play. This typology will be discussed among local/expert, peer/formal and informal/key roles. We tested the typology in the context of French-speakers in Switzerland using a qualitative study. Of the different roles, the key OL role was mainly used by the pharmaceutical industry to promote new medicines. While OLs and physicians are resistant to key OLs interventions, the pharmaceutical industry is subtly shifting its strategy towards OLs having a local role, as these OLs are well perceived by the medical community.

Biography

Anne Laure Pittet has completed her PhD in Life Sciences from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. She completed her Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Business Management at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. She is currently an Associate Researcher at the University Institute of the History of Medicine and Public Health (IUHMSP), Lausanne, Switzerland. Her main topic of interest is the interactions between the physicians, the pharmaceutical industry and the health authorities.

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