

BY JOSHUA SLATKO

The eyes have it

Pharmaceutical advertisers may have to do a better job of connecting with television commercial viewers, according to research done with new eye-tracker technology. PreTesting's e-Motion technology can record visual fixations and saccadic response to media, measuring respondents' emotional interest as they watch commercials. With a target audience's eye-movement response superimposed over a commercial, a second-by-second analysis of a brand's ability to bond with consumers can be produced. Based on a review of several top pharmaceutical commercials with their new technology, PreTesting executives believe that pharmaceutical marketers have a lot to learn, particularly in the art of keeping audience attention focused on key information.

The primary component of e-Motion is monitoring of eye vibrations, known scientifically as saccades. When interested, human eyes are in constant vibration. The speed at which eyes vibrate depends on the viewer's emotional interest in the information being viewed, since the vibrations are controlled by the brain's desire to obtain more visual information. If a viewer is engaged in a visual, the brain will seek more details and specifics, creating more focus points, and thus faster vibrations.

Monitoring such eye movement is a large step forward in being able to calculate viewer interest in every element of a commercial, according to PreTesting executives. "For the first time, without the bias of respondent memory, ego, or desire to please the interviewer, actual second-by-second visual engagement

can be measured for all target audiences," says Lee Weinblatt, CEO, PreTesting (pretesting.com). "This new technology will enable us to understand consumer behavior from the inside as opposed to traditional approaches that rely on consumers to explain the reasons for their actions."

By tracking where the viewer's interest is at every point, e-Motion can uncover subtleties of response, such as when the viewer is paying attention to the wrong thing. Mr. Weinblatt terms such distractions "visual vampires."

Staying focused on information that is actually useful to viewers is a key lesson that many pharmaceutical television advertisers need to learn, according to Mr. Weinblatt. He feels that the industry has frequently done a poor job of keeping commercials focused on information that will connect with viewers, and that industry commercials often suffer from visual vampires and other distractions that keep the message from getting across.

Companies may be confusing quantity for quality as well. "Many pharmaceutical companies do a miserable job at television advertising," Mr. Weinblatt says. "They are trying to use media weight instead of smart advertising. They are trying to hit you over the head. What we have seen is, the more they keep running the same commercial, the quicker it wears out."

The well-known **Rozerem** "Your dreams miss you" spots are an example of pharmaceutical ads that lack focus on the fundamentals, according to Mr. Weinblatt. The product is marketed by **Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America Inc.** (tpna.com).

"With Rozerem, what we found is very strong initial interest on the beaver, not so much on Lincoln, and certainly not on the diver in the background," he says. "But then we see, as the 60 seconds go on, interest just keeps going down and down. On the other hand, in the 15 second commercial we tested, viewers displayed very high visual interest when Lincoln is shooting paper clips over the head of the beaver, but they could not remember a word that they said. So it became a visual vampire."

But when a commercial makes a connection to an issue of real concern to viewers, that interest pops right back. "The one Rozerem spot that worked was when the characters were sitting on a bus stop bench and, for the very first time, when the patient talked about being afraid of taking pills, we suddenly noticed a major spike in the visual attention," Mr. Weinblatt says. "Suddenly they were bonding with the viewer, because that is one of the biggest complaints when people can't sleep — they're afraid of taking pills."

Not all of the pharmaceutical television campaigns that PreTesting researchers have studied with e-Motion performed poorly. One example of a pharmaceutical television spot that grabs and holds the viewer's attention through a combination of gripping visuals and connection to real viewer concerns is the **Lunesta** luna moth spot. Lunesta is marketed by **Sepracor Inc.** (sepracor.com).

The key to that spot, Mr. Weinblatt says, is the combination of the memorable moth image and the visual of seeing people fall asleep — the precise wish of viewers who are potentially interested in the drug. Seeing a person falling asleep ties the memorable image to a viewer's reality — the optimal combination, according to Mr. Weinblatt.

"No matter where that moth goes, the visual attention keeps it alive," Mr. Weinblatt says. "And every time it got near the face of the man or the woman, we found that viewers' examination of the man and woman's face went through the roof. We see the butterfly and the eyelids close. That is what viewers are all hoping for."

Strong pharmaceutical television advertising is eminently possible, according to Mr. Weinblatt, if advertising makers keep their focus on the viewer's needs and concerns and cut down on distractions.

"There are some great commercials that do a wonderful job, and meanwhile everyone is lumping all commercials together and saying TV is dead," he says. "Advertisers have to make sure they have visuals that not only grab and hold attention, but are meaningful to the viewer."

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facts & figures

Elan Corp. and Wyeth's bapineuzumab, the first biologic drug for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, will drive the Alzheimer's disease drug market to more than triple by 2016, reaching **\$8.8 billion**.

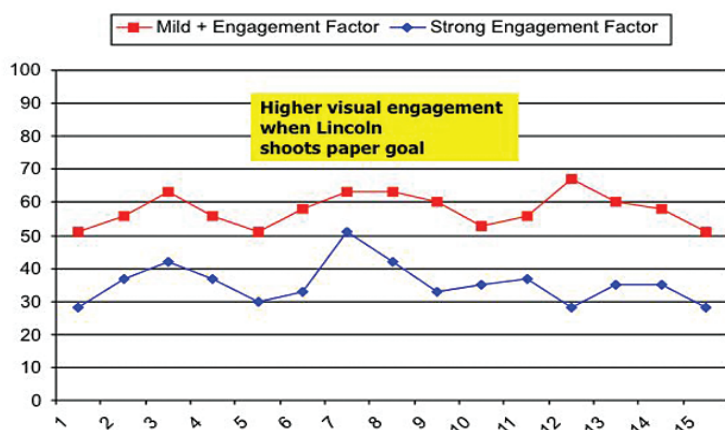
Sales training budgets for each new pharmaceutical sales rep among the U.S. companies averages almost **\$10,500** during the first year. The training budget for new reps is more than double the average for the sales force as a whole.

Avandia and Actos are prescribed to **32.2%** of second-line diabetes patients. These drugs together generated nearly **\$6 billion** in sales in 2006 and had been on pace to strengthen this position. Patients and physicians, however, will be far more reluctant to choose these drugs when other viable and equally convenient options exist.

The global pharmaceutical industry growth rate is estimated at **6.5%** in 2006, with the U.S. market growing **6.4%** and the rest of the world by **6.7%**. A compound annual growth rate of **4.3%** is expected between 2006 and 2013, with the U.S. market growing at just under **4%**.

Sources: Best Practices LLC (best-in-class.com); Decision Resources Inc. (decisionresources.com); Wood Mackenzie (woodmac.com)

Engagement — "Rozerem :15"



e-Motion technology can track levels of viewer engagement throughout a commercial based on eye vibrations.