



Marketing Without the Migraine



Ontario Naturopathic
Integrative Network

Learning Objectives

BY THE END OF THE SESSION, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

1. Differentiate between educational content and advertising under Health Canada and the College of Naturopaths of Ontario (CoNO) frameworks.
2. Identify high-risk marketing practices related to off-label, compounded, and delegated therapies, including substance-based claims, outcome-driven language, and clinic-based calls to action.
3. Assess real-world marketing examples for regulatory risk using a practical red-flag framework.
4. Apply risk-reduction strategies to create compliant, ethical public-facing content that aligns with scope, apparent scope, and advertising standards.

Why This Matters

1. Health Canada and CONO investigations are often triggered by complaints, not intent.
2. Social media content is frequently reviewed out of context.
3. Clinicians have faced investigations based solely on advertising language, even where clinical care itself was appropriate.
4. Off-label and out of scope therapies have additional layers of regulation and therefore potential for increased scrutiny

Two Regulators, Two Lenses

HEALTH CANADA

Health Canada focuses on products and promotion, distinguishing between education and advertising. This regulatory body emphasizes that any off-label or compounded promotion carries a higher risk, ensuring compliance in marketing practices.

CONO

The College of Naturopaths of Ontario (CoNO) centers its attention on scope and apparent scope. They define all public content as advertising and prioritize public interpretation over clinician intent, creating a framework for safe marketing practices.

Health Canada:

OFF-LABEL USE

- Any advertisement of a Drug, NHP or Medical Device must include only its approved use
- It is illegal to market a product for off-label use
- Compounded Substances are not authorized products, and therefore subject to high scrutiny as well.

IT IS ALSO ILLEGAL TO:

- Omit or downplay risks
- Overstate Effectiveness
- Endorse or Make Comparative claims

Health Canada:

CONTENT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED ADVERTISING IF IT IS:

- Product-focused (not disease- or systems-focused)
- Emphasizes benefits over risks
- Uses branded language, clinic branding, or visual cues tied to a product or therapy
- Delivered repeatedly or in a marketing context (e.g., Instagram, clinic website)
- Sponsored or influenced by a product manufacturer or clinic offering the therapy
- Lacks balanced discussion of alternatives and limitations
- Delivered in a context meant to drive uptake (e.g., “Book your IV today”)

Health Canada:

SUBSTANCE-BASED

- Content that names a specific substance can lead to higher advertising risk.
- Benefits tied to that substance.

LINKS TO SYMPTOMS

- When marketing materials link specific symptoms or conditions to a service, they can be classified as advertising.

ACCESS/AVAILABILITY

- Suggesting access or availability of certain treatments can imply promotional intentions
- This increases the risk of being viewed as advertising rather than educational content

The Line: Education vs Advertising

HIGHER RISK

- Content naming a ***specific substance linked to outcomes*** is classified as advertising.
- This creates a perception of promoting specific benefits.

LOWER RISK

- Educational content explains mechanisms and physiological principles without selling access.
- It emphasizes evidence and context.

CoNO Standard of Advertising:

1) THE MEMBER IS ALWAYS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADVERTISEMENTS ABOUT HIS OR HER PRACTICE REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THE ADVERTISEMENT IS MADE BY THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER.

2) ALL PUBLIC FACING CONTENT IS CONSIDERED ADVERTISING

THE MEMBER ENSURES THE INFORMATION IN ADVERTISEMENTS IS:

- accurate
- verifiable by the Member
- not misleading by either omitting relevant information or including non-relevant information
- professional
- comprehensible to its intended audience
- in accordance with the generally accepted standards of good taste

CONO Standard of Advertising:

ADVERTISEMENTS MUST NOT INCLUDE:

- ND ENDORSEMENTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS OF SPECIFIC DRUGS, PRODUCTS, OR BRANDS
- GUARANTEES OF OUTCOMES OR SUCCESS
- COMPARATIVE OR SUPERLATIVE CLAIMS (E.G., “BEST,” “LEADING,” “#1”)
- PATIENT (OR THIRD-PARTY) TESTIMONIALS, DIRECT OR IMPLIED
- LINKS/REFERENCES TO THIRD-PARTY SITES OR PUBLICATIONS THAT FEATURE TESTIMONIALS OR ENDORSEMENTS

CONO Standard of Advertising:

ANY REFERENCE TO THE CURE OF SYMPTOMS OR DISEASES, OR APPEALING TO THE PUBLIC'S FEARS DOES NOT MEET THE STANDARD.

ADVERTISEMENTS DO NOT INCLUDE ANYTHING THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS INTENDING TO PROMOTE A DEMAND FOR UNNECESSARY SERVICES.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES OFFERED BY A MEMBER ADVERTISING IN HER/HER CAPACITY AS A NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR ARE WITHIN THE SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE.

Apparent Scope: Public Perception Risks

OUT-OF-SCOPE THERAPIES

- Content suggesting an ND provides out-of-scope therapies can lead to public misinterpretations.

ND AUTHORITY

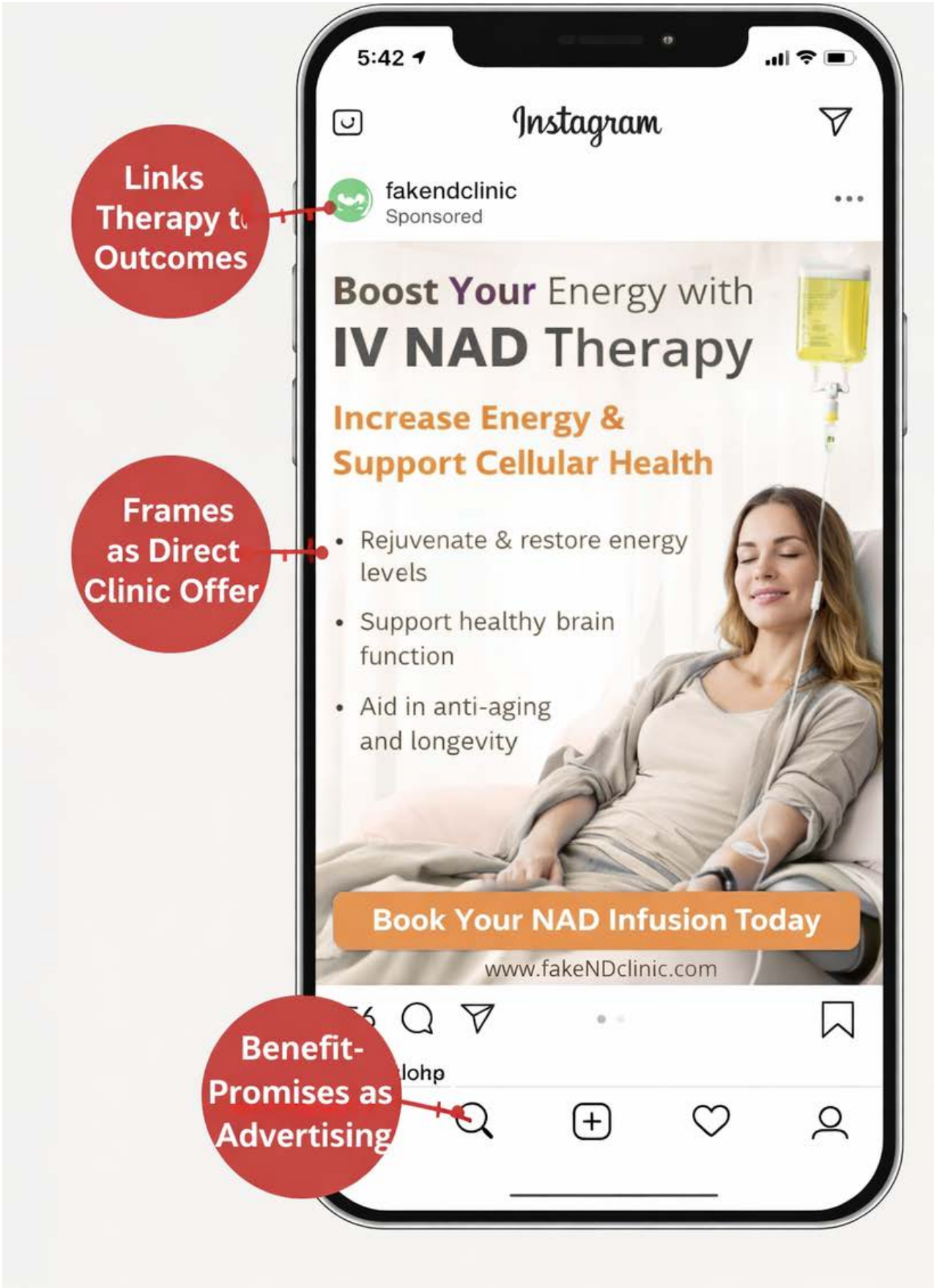
- Implying ND authority in over delegated acts can misguide patients' perceptions of care

Collaborative Care Contexts

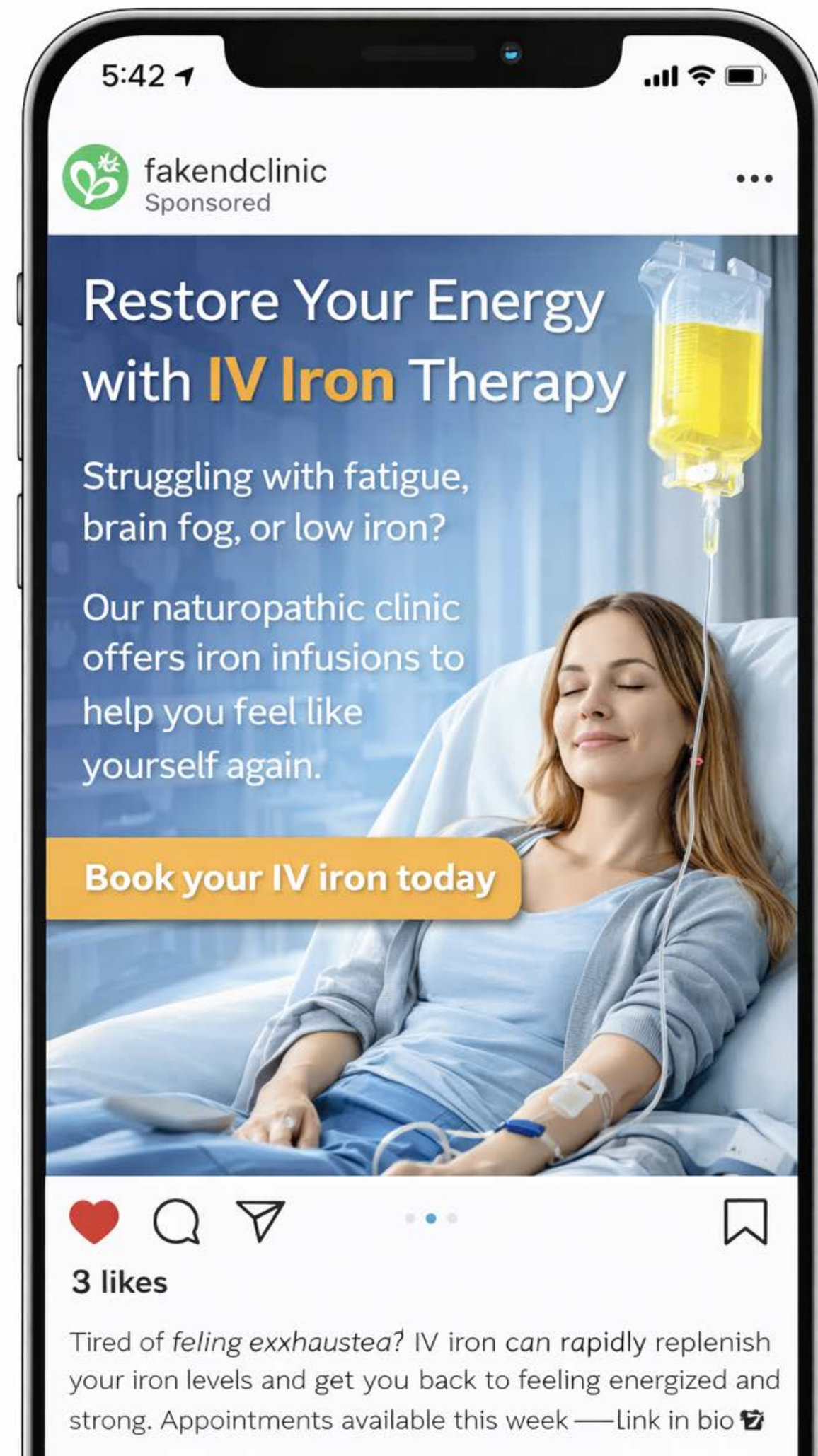
DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE OR INTEGRATIVE CARE MODELS AT A HIGH LEVEL IS GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE

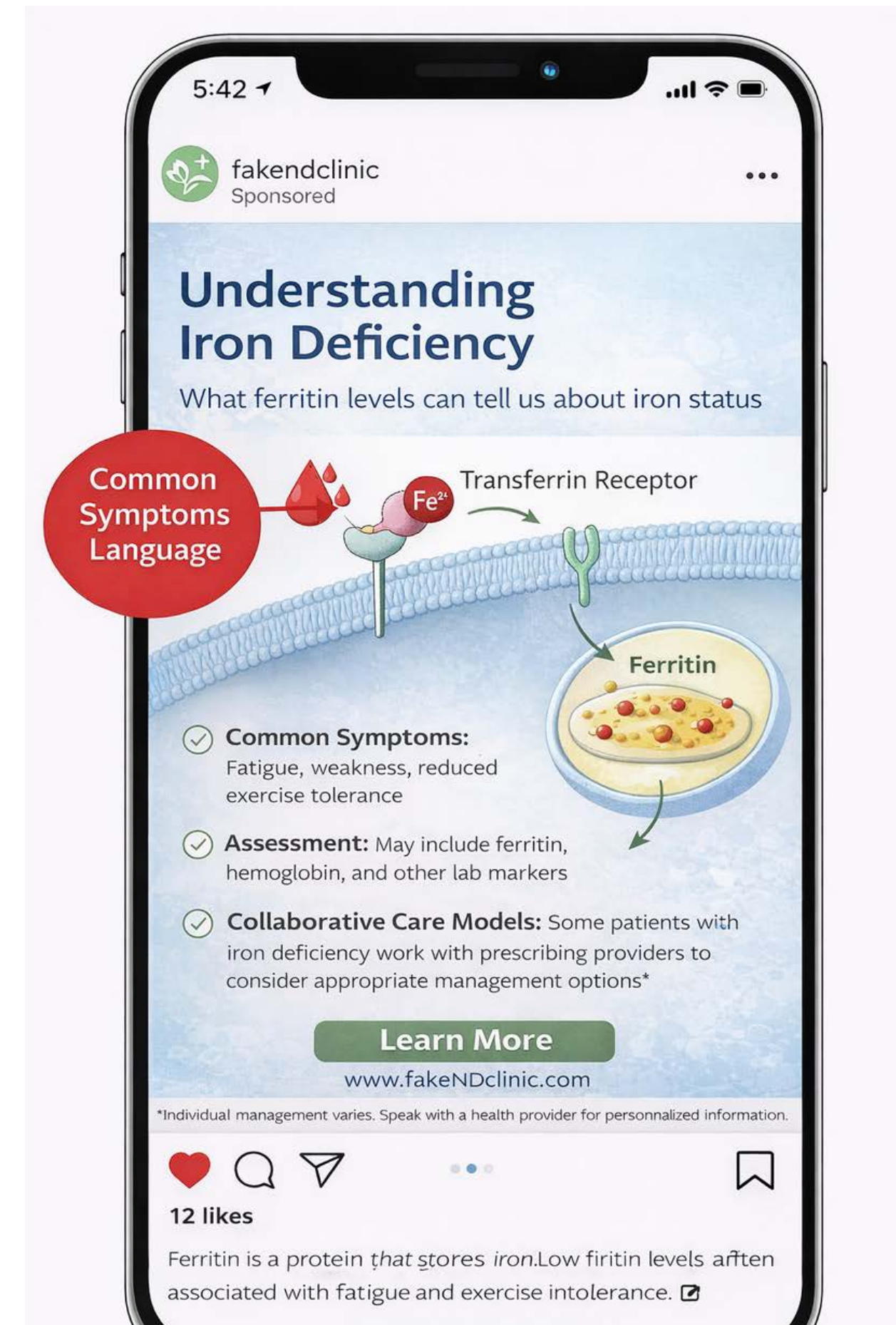
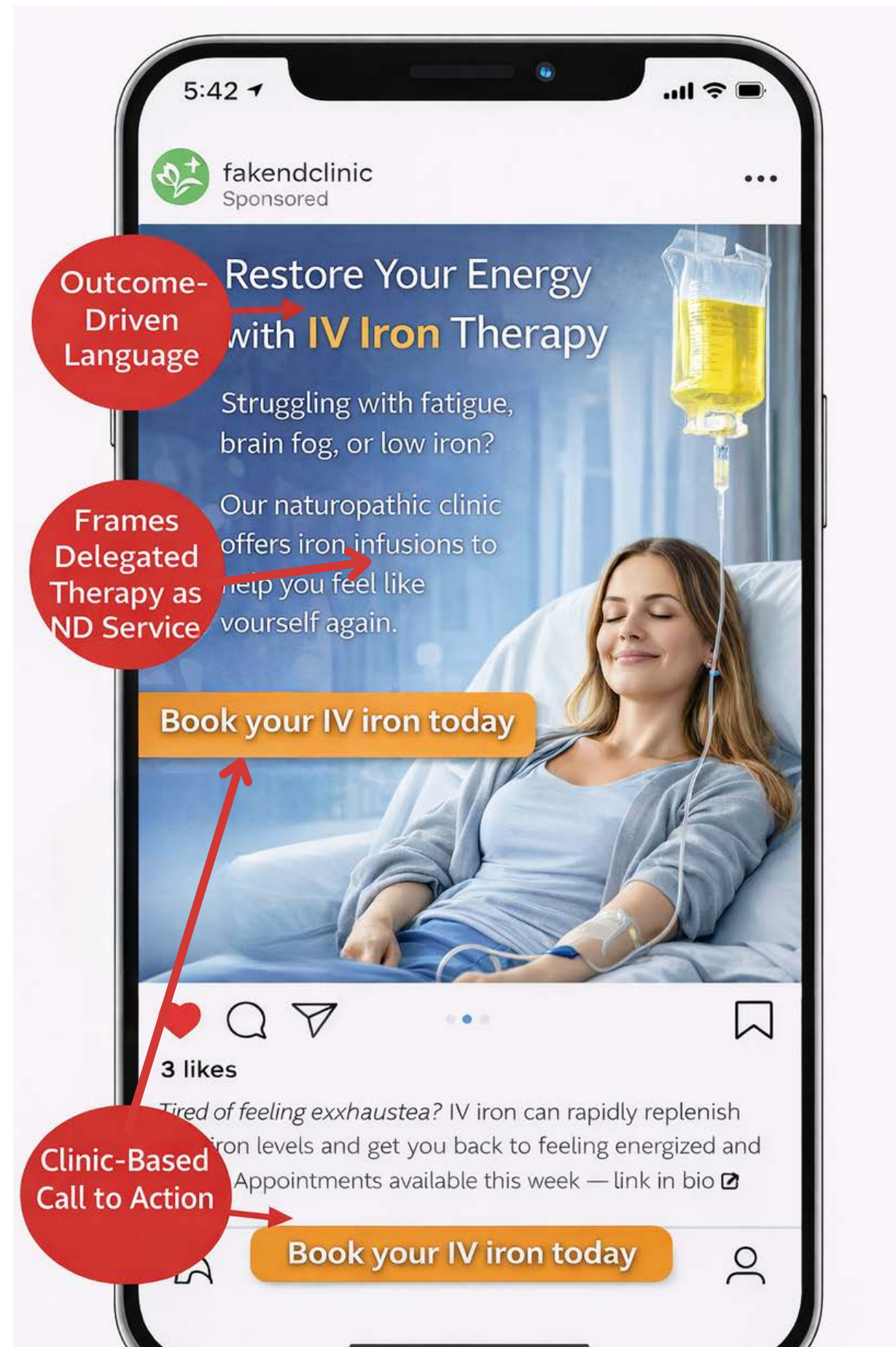
- Risk increases when public messaging:
 - Moves from describing care structure to naming specific therapies
 - Combines therapy names with:
 - symptom relief
 - clinical indication
 - expected outcomes
 - service availability

Off-Label and Compounded Substances



Delegation But On Label?





Delegation But On Label?

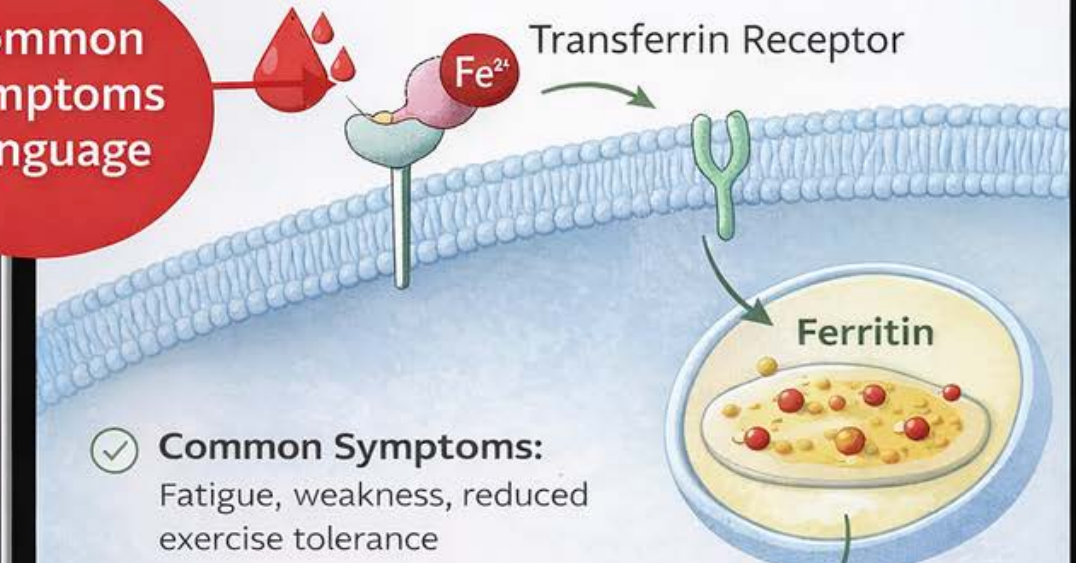
5:42

fakendclinic
Sponsored

Understanding Iron Deficiency

What ferritin levels can tell us about iron status

Common Symptoms Language



Common Symptoms: Fatigue, weakness, reduced exercise tolerance

Assessment: May include ferritin, hemoglobin, and other lab markers

Collaborative Care Models: Some patients with iron deficiency work with prescribing providers to consider appropriate management options*

Learn More
www.fakeNDclinic.com

*Individual management varies. Speak with a health provider for personalized information.

12 likes

Ferritin is a protein that stores iron. Low ferritin levels are often associated with fatigue and exercise intolerance. [🔗](#)

A Few Other Factors

DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE OR INTEGRATIVE CARE MODELS AT A HIGH LEVEL IS GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE

- Risk increases when public messaging:
 - Moves from describing care structure to naming specific therapies
 - Combines therapy names with:
 - symptom relief
 - clinical indication
 - expected outcomes
 - service availability

The 5 Red Flags: Advertising Risks

If your content includes **two or more** of the following red flags,

1. Substance named
2. Linked to symptoms, conditions or outcomes
3. “We offer / book now”

Questions?



**Ontario Naturopathic
Integrative Network**

