

## Steady ratings for 'dLife' get marketers' attention

### Med-u-tainment show may give birth to new pharmaceutical friendly genre

by RICH THOMASELLI

GET READY for "med-u-tainment."

Now that "dLife," the weekly CNBC program devoted solely to those living with diabetes, has inked carriage deals with DirecTV, Dish Network, Healthy Living Network and XM Satellite Radio, pharmaceutical marketers are looking at similar programs for other diseases. "dLife," billed as the first vehicle for "med-u-tainment," a marriage of medial information, education and entertainment, offers pharmaceutical sponsors one of the few, if only, targeted marketing arenas.

"We've been lucky," said "dLife" founder and CEO Howard Steinberg, "in that sponsors have recognized that this is a better, or at least alternative, platform to advertise."

Despite some initial skepticism in the pharmaceutical industry when it first premiered on CNBC in March 2005, "dLife" has held a steady viewership of about 231,000 households and 427,000 viewers in its Sunday, 7 p.m. time



**BIG ISSUES:** 'dLife' is like a health-conscious talk show

slot. Mr. Steinberg purchases the half-hour of access on CNBC and sells the advertising.

The show, hosted by an ensemble of celebrity guests who have diabetes, is filmed before a live studio audience of people with diabetes and their caregivers. The program features segments on exercise, eating correctly, food preparation and more. More than 21 million Americans suffer from diabetes.

### MUST BE CONSIDERED

An executive at one of the top drug makers not currently advertising with "dLife" said the results of the past nine months have persuaded him to at least have a conversation with Mr. Steinberg regarding a new show with a different medical theme.

"You have to consider it," the executive said. "Some of our com-

petitors who are advertising [on 'dLife'] appear to be doing well with this targeted marketing. And maybe this is an answer to critics, to the FDA, to the public regarding direct-to-consumer advertising."

Mr. Steinberg said "it's always been our intention to migrate the model of 'dLife' to other disease states. The criteria is, it has to affect one's

lifestyle; there has to be a substantial market for it; and advertisers have to have a need to reach consumers."

Some obvious topics include heart disease, obesity and allergies.

The increased distribution for "dLife" has attracted an increase in sponsors, including Abbott Laboratories, Sanofi-Aventis, Bayer, Novo Nordisk and Colgate-Palmolive Co.

"The great thing about this is that it's really not a true ad buy," Mr. Steinberg said. "It's programming sponsorship. That's not something a TV network knows how to sell, or even wants to sell."

Though "dLife" does offer 30- and 60-second spots, there are opportunities for brand integration, segment sponsorships and billboards with a brand logo on-screen.