

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Shy bladders don't mean we're losers: Group protests Rob Lowe ad

Shy bladder sufferers want DirecTV to stop airing a television ad where a "painfully awkward" actor Rob Lowe says that he can't urinate in public. The satellite TV company suggests its critics should be able to take a joke. Part of a campaign to encourage people to switch from cable, the ad features two Lowes: a handsome one in a slick suit who claims to be a DirecTV customer, and a goofy-look



DIRECTV via YouTube

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By TODAY

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Part of a campaign to encourage people to switch from cable, the ad features two Lowes: a handsome one in a slick suit who claims to be a DirecTV customer, and a goofy-looking Lowe wearing a fanny pack with his hair parted in the middle. "Painfully awkward" Lowe is a cable customer.

The ad touts DirecTV's service, saying cable makes subscribers wait.

"Fact: I can't go with other people in the room," said awkward Lowe, standing at a urinal.

The ad is in poor taste and ridicules a serious problem, said Steve Soifer, CEO of the International Paruresis Association, which estimates that some 7 percent of Americans have some form of "shy bladder syndrome."

"We don't mind if people have a little fun with it," said Soifer, a social work professor at the University of Memphis. "It's a situation that a lot of people don't understand. In this particular case, the portrayal is making it look ridiculous, that this guy is a loser for having a problem.

"What if he didn't have a leg or an arm?" he said. "Are you going to make fun of them?"

Members of Soifer's group have written and called DirecTV, asking that the ad be removed. But Darris Gringeri, spokesman for DirecTV, said it won't.

"The ads will continue to run for the vast majority of viewers who have told us they enjoy the spots and understand that, like all of our commercials, they take place in a fantasy world and are not based in reality," Gringeri said.

But for some shy bladder patients, there may be a small upside to the controversy over the Lowe commercial — increased awareness: