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## MEDIA STATEMENT

### **Aspirin benefits indisputable for patients with cardiovascular disease**

For patients who have previously had a heart attack or a stroke, low-dose aspirin provides demonstrated benefits in preventing future cardiovascular events and strokes. This role in *secondary* prevention is not controversial, the Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) said today.

ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff, said that aspirin is one of the most extensively studied drugs in history and boasts extensive clinical experience. It has a 110-year track record of safety and efficacy across a range of doses and indications. When used as directed, aspirin provides meaningful benefits, is safe and effective and is infrequently associated with clinically significant side effects.

The use of low-dose aspirin products to help prevent blood clotting and reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in patients with blood vessel disorders is well established. Products for this purpose (i.e. secondary prevention) are available in Australia without prescription but should only be used under medical supervision.

The role of low-dose aspirin for *primary* prevention of cardiovascular events and strokes (i.e. use by patients who have not had a heart attack or a stroke) is less clear and any use in this capacity should only take place under the guidance of a doctor.

The authors of a recent review of a large number of primary prevention studies on the use of low-dose aspirin in patients without previous cardiovascular disease<sup>1</sup> suggest that the benefits of aspirin may not outweigh the risks for these patients.

This approach is consistent with the current position of the Australian National Heart Foundation which does not recommend low-dose aspirin in patients without existing coronary heart disease, stroke or other forms of vascular disease such as heart attack or angina.

“Any decision to use low-dose aspirin to prevent heart attack or stroke should be based on the individual’s absolute risk of cardiovascular disease and on their doctor’s assessment of the totality of evidence of the benefits and the risks for that individual patient”, Mr Scarff said.

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<sup>1</sup> Seshai SRK et al. Effect of Aspirin on Vascular and Nonvascular Outcomes: Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. *Arch Int Med*, published online January 9, 2012. DOI:10.1001/archinternmed.2011.628

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About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. [www.asmi.com.au](http://www.asmi.com.au)

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