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MEDIA RELEASE

Health industry forum discusses better ways for consumers to access treatment for minor ailments

A group of consumer healthcare professionals has met in Sydney to discuss innovative ways of treating minor ailments as a way of better utilising health resources in the community.

The aim of the meeting was to explore how consumers can be assisted to make informed choices about the most appropriate healthcare service to use, particularly when seeking treatment for coughs, colds and other minor ailments.

The forum was organised by the Australian Self-Medication Industry and included representatives from consumers, General Practice, pharmacy, health information service providers, and international healthcare organisations.

ASMI Executive Director, Dr Deon Schoombie, said that the forum explored the issues and opportunities that could allow for a more effective approach to personal health and specifically issues relating to minor ailments.

“Research conducted for ASMI, shows that up to 15% of GP time is involved in treating coughs, colds and other minor ailments, which adds to the pressure on over-stretched GPs.

“The forum discussed how key organisations operating across the health system can work cooperatively to develop initiatives to achieve better use of GP time and improve access to professional healthcare information, including through pharmacists and established advice lines.”

International guests, Bob Gann, Head of Strategy & Engagement, National Health Service (NHS) Choices, and Professor Ian Banks, President of the European Men’s Health Forum, outlined the current approach in the UK, and the lessons learned from the implementation of the NHS telephone and online advice service.

Dr Schoombie said, “The UK approach is well-established and there are many aspects of the system that Australia could learn from to help ease the workload of GPs without compromising public health and safety.

“Australia is making strides to address the needs of people with minor ailments through the Healthdirect Australia advice line, however we need to achieve greater numbers of people accessing this service, and other outlets like pharmacies, to reduce the pressure on our over-burdened medical system.

“I would like to express my thanks to all of those organisations and individuals who contributed to the process. It has been an extremely positive and encouraging first step in what we all hope will be a better approach to managing personal health in the community,” he said.

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.
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