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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Over-the-counter pain relievers a safe and effective remedy for pain and inflammation**

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) today reassured patients that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs) continue to play an important role in short term pain relief for the majority of consumers.

ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff was responding to media reporting of a previously published Danish study<sup>i</sup> which examined the use of popular pain relievers and the incidence of cardiovascular risk. The study looked at the use of a number of NSAIDs in the Danish population between 1997 and 2005.

It is important to recognise that the pain relievers examined were supplied on a doctor's prescription and hence often taken in higher doses, which translates to a higher risk. They were also taken for longer periods than recommended for over-the-counter (OTC) use. On average, people in the study took NSAIDs for 14 days.

The observational study was a review of historical medical record data and unable to identify if there was a pre-existing cardiovascular condition or the presence of other cardiovascular risk factors. It could also not identify the reason for which the NSAIDs were being prescribed.

Interestingly the study also noted that "Use of low-dose ibuprofen and diclofenac was associated with a decrease in risk of cardiovascular death".

Mr Scarff said that unlike the pattern of use on which the Danish study was based, in Australia NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen and diclofenac, are available without a prescription at low doses for short-term use in self-limiting conditions. They are safe and effective for the temporary relief of pain and inflammation.

All OTC medicines must undergo a rigorous evaluation process before they are made available for use in Australia and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) imposes strict labelling requirements to ensure that consumers are able to use them correctly.

"NSAIDs are safe when used as directed, but like any medicine they can cause problems if used incorrectly," Mr Scarff said.

In Australia, labels on over-the-counter NSAIDs include warning statements, to assist consumers in their selection and use of these products. Among other things, these warnings advise consumers with certain existing health problems or who are taking other medications to first seek the advice of their healthcare professional.

“It is important to read labels carefully, and to strictly follow all the directions and, if the pain or other symptoms persist, to consult a doctor or pharmacist,” Mr Scarff said.

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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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<sup>i</sup> Fosbol EL et al. Cause-specific cardiovascular risk associated with nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs among healthy individuals. *Circ Cardiovasc Qual Outcomes*. 2010 Jul;3(4):395-405.