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MEDIA STATEMENT

Media reports regarding alleged misuse of Nurofen Plus

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products said today that a media report claiming misuse of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines containing codeine should be carefully assessed before appropriate action can be considered.

The Scientific Director for ASMI, Deon Schoombie said that OTC analgesics combined with codeine have a long history of safe use when used according to label instructions and many thousands of Australians have benefited from them.

Legislative controls require that these products can only be sold in a pharmacy, and the sale of larger packs (containing 72 tablets or capsules) requires personal intervention by a pharmacist.

It is important to note that serious side effects are associated with high doses and long term use - not with lower dose, short term use. The serious conditions cited in the media report and the case studies reported by Dr Dutch in the *Medical Journal of Australia* are associated with gross misuse of the products – e.g. “72 tablets per day” and “a packet a day for the last year”.

The media report referred to an unnamed online forum and an unnamed ‘founder’ as the basis for comments and statistics. The levels of addiction and abuse alleged in the report are serious but considerable care needs to be taken in assessing such claims. A response to these allegations should be based on hard evidence.

ASMI agrees that healthcare professionals should maintain a high level of vigilance - adverse reactions need to be reported to the Adverse Drug Reactions Advisory Committee (ADRAC) and pharmacists need to maintain a high degree of awareness about people buying large quantities.

OTC medicines containing the ingredients in question are labelled with warning statements and dosage instructions regarding their purpose and safety. Any medicine can cause problems when used incorrectly and must therefore be used strictly according the instructions on the label.

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

Media contact: Bob Bowden, Foresight Communications (02) 9241 2811, 0412 753 298