



Australian Self-Medication Industry Inc  
Suite 2203, Level 22, 141 Walker Street,  
North Sydney NSW 2060  
PO Box 764, North Sydney NSW 2059  
Ph +61 2 9922 5111 Fax +61 2 9959 3693  
Email: info@asmi.com.au www.asmi.com.au  
ABN 55 082 798 952

6 March 2011

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### **Complementary medicines have a place in the total health spectrum**

The role of complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs) in the wider health system should be acknowledged rather than dismissed, and consumers who choose to use these products and treatments should be assisted to make informed choices rather than be categorised as superstitious, the Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) said today.

ASMI was responding to an opinion article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*,<sup>i</sup> which laments the inability of the medical profession to cope with growing consumer demand for alternative remedies.

*“The increasing embrace of wellness ideologies to embellish personal medical credentials is a sign not of enlightened practice, but of the slow decline of the doctor as a genuine source of wisdom,”* the article says.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Dr Deon Schoombie, said that GPs who have embraced complementary medicines should be commended and there should be an enhanced role for the medical profession in helping consumers to better understand the place of evidence-based alternative medicine, including how they can make the most appropriate choices. It is unfortunate to suggest that doctors have surrendered to the wishes of superstitious patients.

“Consumers have made it very clear that they see a distinct role for CAMs as part of an integrated approach to personal health, and they want GPs, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to assist them in making the right choices.

“The notion of ‘wellness’ is an established part of modern health, as exemplified by the focus on preventative health at the Commonwealth level, and the creation of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency. We should applaud this focus, which will assist Australians to maintain good health and prevent disease,” Dr Schoombie said.

ASMI also supports public education initiatives and funding for research that can help build a stronger evidence base to inform the widespread use of CAMs.

“We need to recognise the significant shift in public attitudes over the past two decades and understand that many people with minor ailments or chronic conditions are probably better able to manage their health through greater access to over-the-counter products and complementary medicines.

“All the evidence suggests that the majority of complementary medicine users in Australia are well educated, and approach the use of such products and services in combination with existing orthodox treatments.

“We need to recognise this new reality and work collaboratively with all major players to ensure that consumers are getting the best advice and treatments possible in a 21<sup>st</sup> century health system,” Dr Schoombie 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. [www.asmi.com.au](http://www.asmi.com.au)

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

---

<sup>i</sup> Tanveer Ahmed, “Alternative medicine, superstition of our age”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 2011, [online](#) version.