



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

4 May 2011

MEDIA STATEMENT

Codeine-containing analgesics effective for the majority of users

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products said today that current controls on access to analgesics containing codeine are appropriate and adequate to ensure public health and safety. The vast majority of consumers use these products appropriately and further restrictions to access will not have any meaningful impact on problem users.

ASMI was commenting on a Letter to the Editor in the *Medical Journal of Australia* which was based on a review of 32 patients referred to the Drug and Alcohol Services at the Western Hospital, Melbourne between September 2005 and September 2010. ^[1]

All the patients were diagnosed with opioid dependence and had medical and psychiatric problems related to their misuse of compound analgesic products.

ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff said the issue of misuse and addiction to over-the-counter (OTC) analgesics was a serious health issue, which should not be downplayed.

He said the vast majority of people who use these products do so responsibly. They are intended only for short term use for self limiting conditions, while longer term use should be under the direction of a GP or pharmacist.

One patient cited in the study reported taking more than 70 codeine-ibuprofen tablets daily.

“The level of use that is apparent in the review suggests a pattern that is extreme, and far in excess of what is recommended, and what is typical for the majority of consumers,” Mr Scarff said.

In May 2010, access to these medicines was made more restrictive. They are now only available behind the counter in pharmacies, and purchase requires the personal intervention of a pharmacist. That places pharmacists in a good position to engage with consumers and identify problem users.

ASMI supports calls for high levels of awareness amongst healthcare professionals and pharmacy staff to identify problem users. Consumers should be reminded to follow the label instructions and to talk to their GP or pharmacist if their pain continues.

^[1] McDonough MA, *Medical Journal of Australia* 2011; 194 (9): 486

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
