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MEDIA STATEMENT

Analgesics containing codeine safe for the majority of users

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products said today that the use of non-prescription medicines containing codeine is safe when used according to label instructions. These medicines are intended strictly for short term use and pack sizes are limited to five days supply.

ASMI was responding to comments made today by Dr Claire Tobin from the School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine at Monash University suggesting that analgesics containing codeine should have stronger labelling advice because of their addiction potential.

ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff said that addiction was an important public health and safety issue and ought to be discussed openly and fully.

“Since May this year, access to medicines containing codeine has been made more restrictive to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

“Products containing codeine 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 about the correct use and potential risks associated with these products.

“We welcome discussion on the appropriate labelling of non-prescription medicines and look forward to seeing and reviewing the data behind Dr Tobin’s comments. We also support high levels of awareness amongst healthcare professionals and pharmacy staff to identify misuse. Consumers should be reminded to follow the label instructions and to talk to their GP or pharmacist if their pain persists.

“Industry is committed to considering any measures (including revised labelling) that will contribute to the safe and responsible use of non-prescription medicines and Dr Tobin’s research, when it becomes available, may present an opportunity to re-examine this issue, Mr Scarff 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

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