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3 November 2011

MEDIA ALERT

Behavioural support programs play a role in delivering better healthcare outcomes

Behavioural support programs to assist patients to achieve optimum outcomes from over-the-counter (OTC) medicines should become more commonplace, according to one of the world's leading experts who will speak on this topic at the 2011 Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) national conference in Sydney in November.

Dr Saul Shiffman is a world renowned Research Professor of Psychology (Clinical and Health Psychology), Psychiatry, Translational Clinical Research, and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh.

He says OTC companies are increasingly implementing behavioural programs to help consumers to use medicines well, and to achieve better healthcare outcomes. This has already become evident for smoking cessation and weight loss, but is also featuring in areas such as cholesterol lowering.

"These behavioural programs are clearly very important to help patients to learn to use medicines appropriately, to achieve improved compliance and to bring about good health outcomes," Dr Shiffman says.

There is clinical evidence which clearly demonstrates better healthcare outcomes can be achieved when behavioural support programs are used in conjunction with healthcare products. Smoking cessation is an example, where quit rates improved by up to 40% when Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products were used in conjunction with a behavioural support program.

"We are seeing leading OTC switches increasingly reliant on the evidence of behavioural science, and on the implementation of behavioural programs to assist consumers as they become more involved in self care. These behavioural programs are also moving away from one-size-fits-all programs, to more tailored and personalised programs that are based on individual needs," Dr Shiffman says.

Dr Shiffman says that new technologies are playing a key role in this evolving self care environment.

"Web based services and text messaging services are being deployed to allow consumers to take greater control and to become better informed about health conditions and treatments. They also enable two-way communication with the consumer.

"Both web-based and text-based programs have been clinically demonstrated to help patients, through tailored messages that provide timely information and support."

The conference, *Promoting Self Care Literacy*, will hear experts from government, the healthcare industry, academia, the pharmacy profession, GPs, private health insurance and consumers on latest trends in consumer self care and health literacy.

The conference will take place on Wednesday 16 November at Bicentennial Park, Homebush, Sydney.

Further information on the 2011 ASMI Conference is available at www.asmiconference.com

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.
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