



**Embargo: 00.01am Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009**

**PAGB response to the APPG on Drug Misuse inquiry into the misuse of prescription-only and OTC medicines**

The Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB), the trade association representing manufacturers of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and food supplements, welcomes the review of medicines misuse which has been conducted by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Misuse. The safe use of OTC medicines is of paramount concern to the industry and PAGB submitted written and oral evidence to the inquiry, including a PAGB commissioned independent review of all the available data.<sup>1</sup>

Used correctly, medicines containing codeine are safe and effective. Combining codeine with paracetamol or ibuprofen produces stronger pain relief products – particularly useful for ailments such as back ache, dental pain and period pain.

The scale of dependency linked to OTC codeine products in the UK is unknown. Whilst virtually all researchers agree that misuse of OTC medicines is a small problem and that the vast majority of people use products safely and responsibly, much of the information available is anecdotal.

Sheila Kelly, Chief Executive of PAGB, comments on the report recommendations: “The industry takes its responsibilities seriously and will carefully consider the recommendations made in the report. PAGB will continue to work with, as it has done for many years, regulators, addiction charities and other stakeholders, to discuss steps that can be taken to minimise the risk of codeine dependency; without penalising the millions of people who use products safely and benefit from having access to an effective medicine.”

“A number of measures were already introduced in 2005, including a voluntary pack size reduction and the addition of addiction warnings on pack.<sup>2</sup> PAGB is happy to discuss whether the warnings can be improved, but believes a further pack size reduction (to 18 tablets) would cause inconvenience and have no effect on addiction.”

“PAGB supports the recommendation for a government awareness campaign and believes this should involve pharmacists and pharmacy assistants, as well as doctors.”



“The industry is against further restrictions on advertising as this is not the reason why people become addicted. In any case, there is very little advertising of products containing codeine.”

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors:**

- PAGB is committed to helping empower people to take an active role in managing their own health. It is therefore supportive of this and any other initiatives that are created to improve safe use of OTC medicines
- For further information on OTC medicines containing codeine please refer to PAGB's 'Quick Facts' document.

For further information or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson please contact Claire Weaver, PAGB Communications Officer on 020 7421 9319 or at [Claire.weaver@pagb.co.uk](mailto:Claire.weaver@pagb.co.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Misuse Inquiry into the misuse of prescription-only and over-the counter medicines, Response from Proprietary Association of Great Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Pack sizes were reduced and the following warnings were added to packs of painkillers containing codeine in 2005:

- If you need to use this medicine for more than three days at a time, see your doctor, pharmacist or health care professional.
- Taking codeine regularly for a long time can lead to addiction, which might cause you to feel restless and irritable when you stop the tablets.
- Taking a painkiller for headaches too often or for too long can make them worse.