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### **Industry response to pack size restrictions on pseudoephedrine medicines**

Sheila Kelly, PAGB<sup>1</sup> Executive Director, comments: "We support the measures being introduced to restrict the supply of medicines containing pseudoephedrine."

"Whilst acknowledging the serious harm methylamphetamine can inflict, this is a sensible and proportionate approach to a problem that is still almost non-existent in this country, but one we all want to avoid."

Pack sizes of medicines containing pseudoephedrine will be limited to contain a maximum of 720mg of pseudoephedrine (12 tablets of 60mg or 24 tablets of 30mg), enough for three days treatment for an adult. All the pseudoephedrine medicines continue to be available but companies will phase out the larger packs. Pharmacists will sell one pack at a time.

"The experience from other countries shows reducing pack sizes and introducing more control at point of sale is an effective way to deter the use of pseudoephedrine products to make methylamphetamine, without depriving millions of pharmacy customers of a safe and effective ingredient. Pseudoephedrine products are only available in pharmacies and pharmacists have a good track record in controlling sales of medicines. We are confident that pseudoephedrine can remain available for over the counter sale"

The bulk of the cold and flu products (90 per cent) are **NOT** affected at all by the restrictions, as they contain different decongestants. There is no threat to health for people who use, or have been using, medicines containing pseudoephedrine. As with all over-the-counter medicines, they are safe and effective when used according to the instructions on the pack.

There was strong support for this from many of the organisations who responded to the recent consultation issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, with industry, pharmacy and the majority of medical and consumer bodies all favouring this option.

Commenting on today's decision, Dr Chris Steele notes: "Only a handful of cold and flu products will be affected in any way by these new restrictions. These products will continue to be available. In fact, this decision today is not a surprise and it is in line with the action taken in other countries such as Australia."

Dr Steele adds: "Patients should not be alarmed in any way by this news, which is addressing a very small risk of these everyday remedies being misused by committed drug users. There is absolutely no risk to people taking these tablets as cold and flu treatments."

Rob Darracott, Chief Executive of the Company Chemists Association<sup>2</sup>, added: "We welcome what is now a practical and measured response to what we have always argued, given the existing pharmacy controls, to be a low risk. CCA member companies have already implemented new sales protocols, and are putting in place plans in place to ensure that all pharmacy team members undergo awareness training so that they understand the nature of the threat they are working to prevent."

Colette McCreedy, Director of Practice at the National Pharmacy Association<sup>3</sup>, agreed: "This is a sensible approach which will address the problem but still allow access to a safe and effective range of cough and cold remedies. However as sales restrictions are put in place people will notice a difference when they ask for medicines containing pseudoephedrine and we ask for their understanding. If people have any concerns they should speak to their pharmacist or a member of the pharmacy team."

A Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPSGB)<sup>4</sup> spokesperson commented: "Pharmacy bodies are united on this issue, and will continue to work closely together to ensure the new measures enhance existing pharmacy controls. This outcome allows for more choice, convenience and better access to medicines for patients, and utilises the skills and expertise of pharmacists as experts in medicines. We ask for understanding from the

public that while the restrictions may seem inconvenient, they are preferable to the alternative of restricting these medicines to prescription only.”

“The RPSGB is currently looking in to the practicalities of implementing the controls suggested by the MHRA and training materials are being developed to help support the implementation of these changes within pharmacy.”

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### **Note to editors**

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<sup>1</sup> PAGB – the Proprietary Association of Great Britain represents the manufacturers of non prescription medicines

<sup>2</sup> The Company Chemists’ Association (CCA) represents nine national pharmacy businesses - Alliance Boots, Co-operative Group Pharmacy, Lloydspharmacy, Tesco, J Sainsbury, Wm Morrison Supermarkets, Asda Wal-Mart, Rowlands Pharmacy and Superdrug – who between them operate over 6,000 UK pharmacies.

<sup>3</sup> The National Pharmacy Association represents the owners of community pharmacies including independents and chains.

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. The primary objective of the RPSGB is to lead, regulate and develop the pharmacy profession.

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