

# MEDIA STATEMENT

**DATE: 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

## **PAGB response to consultation on items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care**

In response to the three-month consultation launched by NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners<sup>1</sup>, John Smith, Chief Executive said, “It is important that the NHS uses its limited resources in the most effective way given the current financial pressures and increasing demands on the service.

“There are 57 million GP appointments and 3.7 million visits to A&E departments every year for self-treatable conditions that people could have asked a pharmacist for advice about and could have treated with an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine. PAGB believes it is important to empower people to self care to help to reduce the number of unnecessary GP consultations and A&E visits, and therefore prescriptions for OTC medicines. We have been calling for a national strategy for self care to provide the leadership and policy co-ordination necessary to support this behaviour change.

“The consultation document identifies 3,200 products that are being regularly prescribed but could be purchased OTC, often at a much lower cost to both the individual and NHS<sup>1</sup>. However, simply restricting healthcare professionals’ ability to prescribe, without offering support to empower people to self care could result in more GP appointments from people confused as to how to treat their symptoms and potentially more pressure on GPs to prescribe something else instead. Such a policy would potentially have a disproportionately adverse effect on vulnerable groups in society.

“To support better use of OTC medicines and help educate people on how to self care for their self-treatable conditions, PAGB has been calling for the introduction of “recommendation prescription” pads for GPs and other healthcare professionals, to provide clearer guidance to people who attend appointments with a self-treatable condition about which OTC products they can purchase or other action they can take to ease their symptoms, such as changes to diet or exercise.

“Some medicines that are available OTC to manage self-treatable conditions are also prescribed for the treatment of long-term or more serious illnesses, or to prevent illness, disability and NHS costs in the future. It will be important for NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners to take this into account as part of the review. PAGB

believes that in these specific circumstances healthcare professionals should be able to continue to use their clinical judgement on appropriate prescribing.”

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**Notes to editors:**

PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain) is the UK trade association representing manufacturers of branded over-the-counter medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Items-not-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care.pdf>