

MEDIA RELEASE

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PAGB response to Express Online article on branded painkillers

John Smith, PAGB Chief Executive, comments: “In the UK, a wide range of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, both branded and generic, are available to buy from pharmacies and other retail outlets. This ensures people are able to choose a medicine, which suits their needs and their budget.

“The majority of branded medicines on the market in the UK are different to the generic equivalents. Although the active ingredient in branded and generic OTC medicines might be the same, the inactive ingredients, or excipients, which are used to formulate the active ingredient into its given form e.g. tablet or liquid - may differ, causing the medicines to vary in appearance, speed of release or duration of relief. This offers benefits to people such as a fast dissolving coating so the medicine works faster, a slow release formula so the symptom relief lasts longer, improved taste or easy to swallow formulations.

“Branded OTC medicines enjoy a long-standing heritage of trust and manufacturers invest heavily in years of research and new product development, often being the first to bring new medicines to market. While 20 years may be the standard length of patent for prescription medicines, this is not the case with OTC products. It is exceedingly rare for new OTC medicines to have any form of protection on entry to the market. Other companies are then free to make their own versions, and as they don't bear the original development costs they can sell it at a lower price.

“As with all medicines, it's important that people always read and follow the instructions and are careful not to take more than one product containing the same active ingredient. A pharmacist can give advice on the most suitable medicine to take if people are unsure.”

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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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