



MEDIA RELEASE

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PAGB response to *Which?* article on branded over-the-counter pain medicines

John Smith, PAGB Chief Executive, comments: "In the UK, a wide range of over-the-counter (OTC) pain 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 pain 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.

"Some OTC products are marketed to target specific symptoms, this is because research shows that having specific symptoms displayed on the front of the pack helps people to navigate the shelf and choose a suitable product easily.

"Compound products containing a combination of active ingredients, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen, can provide a more convenient dosage formulation for those looking to increase their pain relief.

"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 defines Self Care as the actions people take for themselves and their families to promote and maintain good health and wellbeing and to take care of their self-treatable conditions.

PAGB, the consumer healthcare association, represents the manufacturers of branded OTC medicines, self care medical devices and food supplements in the UK.

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