



Thursday 3rd September 2009

**NEW CODEINE CONTROLS ARE MEASURED AND IN THE
PUBLIC INTEREST**

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland has moved to reassure the public following the announcement of new warnings and tighter controls on the sale of Over the Counter Medicines containing Codeine. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) announced the moves following advice from the Commission on Human Medicines on the potential risk of patients' overusing or becoming addicted to codeine.

Commenting on the changes, Raymond Anderson, President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, and a community pharmacist in Portadown, said:

"Pharmacists are best placed to give advise on the safe use of codeine medicines and I encourage members of the public to always speak to their local pharmacist where possible when seeking over the counter pain relief.

I also want to reassure the public that there is no immediate recall of codeine medicines. These changes are precautionary and made following the evidence-based consideration of the Commission for Human Medicine.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland supports the new recommendations as being in the interests of patient safety. We will be issuing further advice to pharmacists on implementing the new measures."

ENDS

For further information please contact Mark Neale, Head of Public Affairs at the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, on 028 90 326 927 or 07854 004 884 mark.neale@psni.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland is the regulatory body for pharmacy in Northern Ireland. Its principal objective is the protection of patient safety in the provision of pharmacy services in Northern Ireland.
2. Mr. Raymond Anderson (or another spokesperson from the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland) will be available for interview throughout Thursday 3rd September. Contact should be made with Mark Neale in the first instance on 02890 326 927 or 07854 004 884 to arrange this.
3. Raymond Anderson owns and runs a number of community pharmacies in the Portadown area, has been President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland since 2006, sits on the Central Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee and has recently been appointed Vice-President of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association.
4. The complete package of new measures announced by the MHRA includes:
 - i. Clear and prominently positioned warnings on the label and Patient Information Leaflets of medicines containing codeine, warning about the risk of addiction, and the importance of not taking these medicines for longer than three days.
 - ii. New guidance on medicine products containing codeine, recommending their use for treating moderate pain not relieved by simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen.
 - iii. Large packs of more than 32 effervescent codeine tablets will no longer be sold in the pharmacy but will be available on prescription
 - iv. Packs of effervescent codeine containing 32 tablets or less will still be available in pharmacies
 - v. New controls on advertising to ensure the warning about the use of codeine-containing products are clearly presented
5. Changes to Marketing Authorisations of codeine containing products will be completed by 31st December 2009 and all products with the updated information will be on pharmacy shelves 3-6 months later.
6. Full details on the MHRA advice will be available on its website from 10.00am on Thursday 3rd September 2009

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/index.htm>