



Friday 23rd April 2010

Consultation launched on provision of homeopathic products within Northern Ireland pharmacies

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland has today published a consultation on new guidance to pharmacists on the provision of homeopathic products within a pharmacy. The draft guidance advises pharmacists that when providing a homeopathic product, the patient should be advised that there is no strong scientific or clinical evidence base for the efficacy of homeopathic products other than having a placebo effect.

The new guidance comes following a report by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee into homeopathy which reviewed the evidence base and found it was not an efficacious form of treatment.

Commenting on the draft guidance, Registrar Brendan Kerr said:

“Homeopathy is not a risk free form of alternative health treatment. There are real dangers that a patient using homeopathic products may be failing to seek appropriate diagnosis of a more serious underlying condition. Therefore, in our role of protecting patient safety in pharmacy it is appropriate and necessary that formal professional guidance be issued to pharmacists on this matter.”

“I hope professionals, members of the public and other stakeholders will take the opportunity to feed in their views on this pertinent issue before we finalise the formal guidance.”

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. More details on the consultation on guidance to pharmacists on the provision of homeopathic products within a pharmacy can be found here:

<http://www.psni.org.uk/professionals/current-consultations.php>

2. The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland is the regulatory body for pharmacy in Northern Ireland. It protects public safety in pharmacy by:
 - setting and promoting standards for pharmacists' admission to the register and for remaining on the register;
 - maintaining a publicly accessible register of pharmacists, and pharmacy premises, in Northern Ireland;
 - handling concerns about the Fitness to Practise of registrants, acting as a complaints portal and taking action to protect the public; and
 - ensuring high standards of education and training for pharmacists in Northern Ireland.
3. The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee published its report on homeopathy in February 2010. Amongst its conclusions were:
 - the NHS should cease funding homeopathy
 - the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) should not allow homeopathic product labels to make medical claims without evidence of efficacy
 - As they are not medicines, homeopathic products should no longer be licensed by the MHRA
 - labelling of homeopathic products should make it explicit that there is no scientific evidence that homeopathic products work beyond the placebo effect

More details can be found here:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/science_technology/s_t_homeopathy_inquiry.cfm