



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MANNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

**Pharmaceutical
Society**
of
Northern Ireland



**Health and Social
Care Board**

Dear Colleague

OVER THE COUNTER MEDICINES LIABLE TO MISUSE

There have been a number of cases where customers have requested, on a regular basis, supplies of over the counter medicines liable to misuse.

Some of these individuals were subsequently referred to Addiction Services where they received treatment for addiction to codeine. It transpired that many have gastrointestinal and hepatic problems as a result of their consumption of over the counter medicines (mainly combination codeine products). This has resulted in some receiving major surgery with significant long term sequelae.

Community pharmacists exercise an essential role in providing appropriate over the counter treatment to patients and, at the same time, recognising products liable to misuse and refusing such sales, where appropriate. It should be noted that in addition to misuse by the general public, health care professionals can also misuse such medicines. Pharmacists and their staff should also be vigilant for this possibility.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland has issued guidance on the sale and supply of medicines and also on raising associated concerns. Pharmacists are reminded of the first principle of the Code of Ethics which requires the making of the safety and welfare of patients your prime concern.

In order to maximise the health protection role that pharmacy can offer, you are asked to consider:

- Removal of promotional material for medicines that may be subject to abuse

- Developing robust written procedures for the sale of such medicines including the need to comply with legislation with regard to pack sizes
- Reviewing the range and quantities of stock held
- Repositioning stock of potential abuse within the dispensary to ensure it is sold only under the personal control of a pharmacist
- Utilising EPOS tills where appropriate to display warnings to staff members to reinforce messages and warnings related to these products
- Staff training in how to deal with requests for medicines with abuse potential and when and how to refer on
- Sales logs for medicines likely to abuse
- Developing processes for sharing information with GP practices and other pharmacies
- Maintaining a list of addiction service contacts

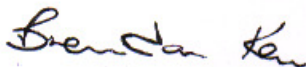
Yours faithfully



Mr Joe Brogan
Assistant Director of Commissioning – Pharmacy and Medicines Management
HSCB



Dr Mike Mawhinney
Head of Medicines Regulatory Group



Mr Brendan Kerr
Registrar, Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland