



**PRACTISE UPDATE 11 OCTOBER 2010
ADVICE ON SALES OF CODEINE TO UNDER 18s**

On 4th October 2010, the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) issued new advice indicating that over-the-counter liquid medicines containing codeine should no longer be used in children under 18 years.

In light of this advice the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland advises that from today, Monday 11 October 2010, pharmacists should:

For Immediate action

- NOT recommend or counsel patients to use codeine containing liquid medicines if under 18 years old; and
- Observe due diligence when selling codeine containing liquid medications which are labelled with older packaging giving dosage information for patients under 18. The pharmacist should clarify for the patient that this advice is no longer appropriate following the CHM's review.

For Longer term action

Manufacturers will update the packaging and leaflets for their products and new stock is expected to appear in pharmacies from April 2011. Pharmacists do not need to remove existing stock from shelves but are asked to action the new advice when recommending any codeine containing cough medicines.

Further information about:

- the products affected;
- the background to the new advice; and,
- advice to give if supplying a codeine containing product to breastfeeding mothers,

can be found in the MHRA letter below:

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/home/groups/pl-p/documents/websiteresources/con096756.pdf>

Pharmacists are also reminded of the professional advice on codeine sales issued in September 2009:

<http://www.psni.org.uk/documents/376/PSNI+Advice+on+Codeine.pdf>

This states that sales of medicines containing codeine and dihydrocodeine should:

- Only be undertaken by trained staff operating to written pharmacy procedures under the supervision of a pharmacist;
- Be restricted to a single pack sold in any purchase; and,
- Be assessed for potential misuse.

Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to intervene where addiction is suspected and they should seek to refer any such patient to appropriate help or support services.

Brendan Kerr

Registrar

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland