



Better health for New Zealanders through the development of responsible self-medication

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MEDIA STATEMENT

World healthcare experts say NZ should adopt Minor Ailment Strategy now

Two leading healthcare experts will be in New Zealand this week reporting on evidence that shows this country could save thousands of lives and precious health dollars by adopting a Minor Ailment Strategy such as used in the UK, and under consideration in Australia.

The Minor Ailment Strategy promotes pharmacists as healthcare professionals and the first point of care for minor ailments, allowing GPs to spend more time on complex cases. The strategy also encourages people to become more responsible for their own health.

Dr David Webber, chief executive of the World Self-Medication Industry and Nicholas Hall, a world renowned expert on the over-the-counter pharmaceutical industry, will be guest speakers at the annual conference of the New Zealand Self-Medication Industry (NZSMI) on October 15 in Auckland. NZSMI is the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products sector.

Dr Webber will address the conference on the need for countries to move from the traditional sickness/cure (biomedical) model of healthcare to a preventative self care solution.

“Fifty percent of mortality from the 10 leading causes of death is due to personal behaviours. Medical professionals (and governments) cannot alone solve the world’s problems with obesity, smoking habits, risky lifestyles, and so on.

“Developing better health must inevitably involve actions and measures lying outside the current reach of ‘biomedical model’ health systems. Self-care by individuals themselves has a particularly important role to play,” says Dr Webber.

He says chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart and respiratory illness and cancers account for more than 90 percent of all deaths in New Zealand - and most are preventable.

It is estimated there are more than 8000 preventable deaths a year in NZ related to poor nutrition and obesity and the annual cost of obesity and diabetes to the health system is estimated at \$900 million a year. In the next eight years it is forecast that the cost for Type 2 diabetes, common among obese adults, will rise to \$1.3 billion a year.

NZSMI executive director Tim Roper says Government health budgets simply cannot be sustained at current levels without significant increases in taxation to fund mounting health bills. On current projections health spend share of GDP is expected to double by 2050 to 12 percent.

NZSMI recently submitted a paper to the Health Minister suggesting the Ministry provide seed funding for a New Zealand study on the amount of time the average GP spends attending to minor ailment queries. Similar studies have shown minor ailment queries account for 20 percent of GP workload in the UK (where GP visits are free) and 15 percent in Australia.

By freeing up GP time and reducing prescriptions for minor ailments, the savings could be allocated to other health services, explains Mr Roper.

Associate Minister of Health Hon Peter Dunne will open the NZSMI conference and participate in a panel discussion on “Minor Ailments – an Opportunity for Self Medication” which will be facilitated by broadcaster Paul Holmes.

Nicholas Hall will address the conference on “How to overcome the Recession through OTC marketing” as well as participating in a panel discussion on “How should industry and regulators cooperate to unleash the potential of Self Care?”

Link to NZSMI Self Care paper:

<http://www.nzsmi.org.nz/documents/0715%20Self%20Care%20in%20New%20Zealand.pdf>

Ends

About SMI: The New Zealand Self-Medication Industry Association Inc (SMI) is the national trade association representing manufacturers, marketers and distributors of a wide range of products, generally available "over-the-counter" (OTC) and mainly for use in self-medication by New Zealand consumers. SMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all New Zealanders at a reasonable cost. SMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy.

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