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MEDIA RELEASE

Lessons from UK government health reform to be shared with Australian audience

The senior UK government official responsible for slashing red tape in the UK health system will speak at the national conference of the Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) in November.

Chris Horsey is the Head of Better Regulation in the UK Department of Health, the unit responsible for sweeping changes in the country's health system that have seen increased emphasis on consumer self care, a fresh focus on the role of pharmacy, and reductions in the burden of unnecessary regulation.

The UK regulatory agency for therapeutic products, the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has taken a leading role in helping to reshape the health system through a risk based approach to regulation, and changed roles for some stakeholders.

In the UK, pharmacies will become healthy living centres promoting health, and helping people to take better care of themselves. They will be the first port of call for minor ailments, and be able to prescribe certain medicines.

The role of pharmacy is expanding in preventative health, and in areas such as smoking cessation, weight management, access to contraception services and chlamydia screening.

The UK regulator is effectively driving an agenda for the 'switch' of medicines from prescription to non-prescription status where it is safe and appropriate to do so, increasing consumer access to a wider range of medicines.

Key elements of the MHRA's National UK strategy include a new lifecycle assessment unit for over-the-counter medicines, the appointment of a Specialist in Self Medication, a reclassification 'think tank', and a re-evaluation of switch guidelines.

Mr Horsey will provide an update on the MHRA work in these areas and its relationship with industry, as well as an outline of how the new self care agenda has helped curtail the ballooning health budget.

ASMI Executive Director, Juliet Seifert said it was important to be able to share the valuable lessons from the UK experience with an Australian audience.

“Much of what Australia is currently attempting with its health reform agenda has been advanced in the UK system, and we will have the chance to hear first-hand how that has been achieved”.

The ASMI Conference, with a theme of, *“Self Care: How Much Is Your Responsibility?”* will be held on Thursday 12 November at Australian Technology Park, Redfern.

Other speakers and panellists include:

- **The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP**, Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, and Minister Assisting the Finance Minister on Deregulation;
- **Dr Tony Hobbs**, Chair, National Primary Health Care Strategy External Reference Group;
- **Professor Stephen Leeder**, Director Menzies Centre for Health Policy;
- **Prof Alan Bensoussan**, Executive Director, National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM)
- **Michael Smith**, Head of the Office of Complementary Medicines, Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)
- **Dr Linda Suydam**, President, Consumer Healthcare Products Association (United States);
- **Carol Bennett**, Executive Director, Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- **Christine Holgate**, CEO & Managing Director, Blackmores
- **Jez Moulding**, General Manager, sanofi-aventis Australia & New Zealand
- **Dr Norman Swan**, ABC, *The Health Report*;
- **Odette Gourley**, Partner, Corrs Chambers Westgarth.

About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI’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 Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI 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. www.asmi.com.au

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