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MEDIA STATEMENT

Treatment of coughs & colds in children under two years of age

Parents and those caring for children under two should consult their pharmacist or GP about treatment for coughs and colds following today's decision by the National Drugs and Poisons Scheduling Committee (NDPSC) to reschedule some medicines containing sedating antihistamines for infants from over-the-counter status to prescription only.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Juliet Seifert said the decision does not affect the treatment of children older than two, and that parents should not be alarmed if they have previously used these medicines to treat children.

“The cough and cold medicines in question have been widely used for many years and are considered safe when used as recommended. The NDPSC has noted a relatively small number of adverse events in children under two and says that in its opinion, the risks might outweigh the potential benefits. As result it has decided to take a precautionary approach.

“In a number of cases, the concerns over these preparations appear to stem from overseas reports where parents or carers have been confused about the correct dose or had given more than one product containing the same active ingredient. There have also been reports of misuse of these products to sedate children rather than to relieve the symptoms of coughs and colds.

“The industry accepts the decision and understands the historical series of events, which first saw the matter considered back in 2006, which has culminated in the latest announcement.

“This has been a protracted issue which initially arose out of the proposed therapeutic goods harmonisation arrangements between Australia and New Zealand, in which it was intended that Australia would follow New Zealand's lead in making these products prescription only.

Anyone who is unsure about the correct medicines to use, particularly if a child is under 2 years old should speak to a pharmacist or GP.

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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