



Consumers Health  
Forum **OF** Australia

# **Codeine: Update on Changes to Access to Codeine and What This Means for Pain Management**

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**Consumers shaping health**

# Overview

- What is happening
- Why the change
- Real relief Campaign
- National Action Plan for Pain
- Consumer Resource kit

# What is going on

- From 1 February medicines containing codeine will no longer be available without a prescription
  - Include medicines for pain and cough and cold preparations
- Decision made by scheduling delegate of Secretary of Health-20 December 2016
  - Extensive public consultation
  - Discussion at Advisory Committee on Medicines Scheduling ( august 2015 and March 2016)
- Activities to prepare for change
  - Training for pharmacists and pharmacy assistants
  - Discussions with doctors and other health professionals
  - Consumer messages through painAustralia, CHF , NPS medicine Wise and Scriptwise

# Background to changing access

- Two issues: safety and efficacy
- Balancing up benefits against harm
- Too many people die each year from codeine
  - Codeine related deaths doubled between 2000 and 2009
  - 100 death directly related to codeine i.e. 2 a week
- Bringing Australia into line with a number of other countries

# Safety

- Addiction/dependency
  - Many not aware are addicted/dependent
- Combination- quantities
  - Paracetamol and ibuprofen also harmful
- Potential for misuse
  - Intentional self-harm
  - Accidental overuse and misuse
- Around 40 per cent of codeine related deaths involved over-the counter-products

# Efficacy

- Research shows low dose medicines containing codeine offer little if any additional benefit when compared to similar medicines without codeine
- Particularly not effective for long- term or chronic pain
  - Does not work for pain beyond 3 days
- Other non- medicine approaches to chronic pain can be as effective
- Safer alternatives for acute pain

# Consumer concerns

- Nothing to manage pain
  - Range of alternatives
    - Talk to GP
    - Go to [relaxrelief.org](http://relaxrelief.org)
  - Still available with a prescription as part of an agreed pain management plan
  - Need an individual pain plan as each case is different
- Penalising those who use it responsibly
  - Risk of addiction/dependency is high
  - Risk of unintentional over-use is high because of differing response to codeine
- Cost of going to doctor to get prescription
  - Alternatives may work
  - Part of regular doctor visits if for chronic pain
  - New acute pain should be investigated

- Limited access to alternatives
  - Why we need an a National Action Plan to look at ways to improve access to alternatives
- Where do I go to get help if I think I have a problem managing without codeine
  - To your GP
- What about abuse of prescription codeine
  - Doctors looking at improving prescribing habits
  - Looking at real time monitoring of prescription dispensing to stop doctor shopping



**Questions?**



# Real Relief Campaign

Presentation for CHF codeine webinar

Carol Bennett  
CEO PainAustralia  
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# Real Relief Campaign

- Campaign to educate consumers about upcoming changes to codeine access running 22 December 2017 to 1 February 2018
- Social media: Real Relief Facebook page and @Painaustralia Twitter account #realrelief
- Paid digital advertising: Facebook, Google Adwords, digital display and programmatic video
- Earned free media
- Media driving people to website [realrelief.org.au](http://realrelief.org.au)

# Media Outcomes to Date

- Extensive retweets and more than 56,000 reach on Real Relief Facebook site
- Significant amount of free media earned, across all platforms (TV, radio and press)
- Strong level of media interest continuing
- Consumer-led change.org petition calling for better pain management options currently has more than 2,200 signatories

# Key Messages

- Informed by social marketing
- Information about up-scheduling
- Evidence to show codeine regulation is necessary
- Education about the warning signs of codeine overdose
- Education about safer pain management options
- Case studies
- New content created based on feedback

# Call for National Action Plan

- Codeine issue has highlighted national pain epidemic, opioid misuse and need for national action plan
- Many reliant on codeine due to limited awareness about alternatives for pain management
- Millions of Australians living with pain – all should be able to access effective pain management services
- painAustralia's Pre-Budget Submission outlines seven priority objectives and 16 key projects (download from [painaustralia.org.au](http://painaustralia.org.au))

# Seven priority objectives

1. Minimising our pain burden is a national priority
2. Empowering consumers
3. Preventing chronic pain and reducing opioid misuse
4. Minimising the impact of pain on the workforce
5. Expanding pain treatment and consumer support including regional services and priority groups
6. Build capacity in the health and aged care sector
7. Understanding pain and its impact through research

# 16 key projects

Pain a national priority

1. Update National Pain Strategy

Empowered consumers

2. Establish a web-based consumer network

Prevent pain

3. National Summit to reduce opioid harm  
4. Strategy for opioids on discharge  
5. National program for rehab after surgery

Reduce impact on workforce

6. National approach to support people returning to work after injury



# 16 key projects

More treatment  
and support  
options

7. Evaluate online pain programs
8. Establish mini pain program
9. Expand telehealth
10. Pain program for aged care

Build capacity  
in workforce

11. Expand training for medical professionals
12. Pain management training for aged care workers

Understand  
pain through  
research

13. Secure future of ePPOC (data collection to improve pain services)
14. ABS National Health Survey data on pain
15. Update understanding of cost of pain
16. Pain a priority under Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)

# Questions

# Next Steps

- Consumer Resource Kit
  - Set of resources for consumer/community organisations to use to talk to people about the changes
  - Emphasis on where to find help with pain management
- Continued advocacy for more action on pain

# More Information

- TGA Codeine hub  
[www.tga.gov.au/codeine-info-hub](http://www.tga.gov.au/codeine-info-hub)
- [www.realrelief.org.au](http://www.realrelief.org.au)
- [www.nps.org.au/medical-info/clinical-topics/over-the-counter-codeine-changes-to-supply](http://www.nps.org.au/medical-info/clinical-topics/over-the-counter-codeine-changes-to-supply)
- [www.scriptwise.org.au](http://www.scriptwise.org.au)