

COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS OF MEDICAL COLLEGES

STATEMENT ON ENSURING STRICT CODEINE REGULATION

The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges supported the decision made by the Therapeutic Goods Administration in December 2016 to change access to painkillers containing codeine to prescription-only from February 2018 because consumers frequently became addicted to codeine.

Professor Nicholas Talley, Chair of the Council said today that “it is important to protect the safety of the public from abuse of this addictive drug.”

The Council supports the introduction of tighter regulation surrounding the use of painkillers and other products containing codeine, because medications sold over the counter or through pharmacies should be substantially safe and not subject to abuse.

Professor Talley said “it was clear from the evidence that access to codeine-based products is not safe and there are side-effects including addiction.”

He said that all specialist Medical Colleges are concerned to ensure strict regulation is placed on access to codeine, and referred to a study which showed that codeine-related deaths more than doubled in the ten years to 2009. Approximately half of these deaths were accidental (www.mja.com.au/journal/2015/203/7/trends-and-characteristics-accidental-and-intentional-codeine-overdose-deaths)

The Council notes that extra regulation is already in force in most European countries, Japan and the United States.

The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges is the peak body for specialist medicine in Australia. We educate and train Australia’s future doctors to provide the highest quality medical care. Our vision is to improve, protect and promote the health of the Australian public.

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