



Sale of Codeine Containing Analgesics Joint Statement

1. Pharmacist only sales of codeine containing analgesics are intended for acute use only. Acute conditions are described as usually having a rapid onset and often lasting less than three weeks. They may recur from time to time, may or may not resolve on their own and may or may not require referral to a doctor.
2. Repeat sales of codeine containing analgesics within a short timeframe are likely to be inappropriate in the majority of cases. An alternative, clinically suitable non-codeine containing analgesic should be offered or the patient referred to an appropriate health professional for a full diagnostic assessment so that the optimal management can be identified.
3. Pharmacists must be vigilant about frequent purchasers and use clinical judgement about whether supply of the requested codeine containing analgesic is appropriate. Codeine seekers usually provide false details about symptoms and do not accept offered alternatives.
4. Codeine seekers are known to offer false names or addresses when attempting to purchase from the same pharmacy. It is advisable to consider requesting photo identification to confirm patient identity when recording purchaser details, particularly if there are concerns about the legitimacy of the request. Recording details of the sale in an electronic database, such as your dispensary system provides additional information regarding patient medication use particularly in areas where a shared patient record is accessible. Any concerns about frequent purchasers should be reported to Medicines Control.
5. Pharmacist Only Medicines must not be available for patient self-selection. It is the responsibility of the pharmacist to ensure that the patient receives safe, clinically appropriate assessment before a decision on management can be made.
6. To ensure that patients continue to have access to codeine containing analgesics as Pharmacist Only Medicines, it is vital that best practice principles through strong clinical and ethical decision making are adhered to at all times.
7. Due to their potential for misuse, advertisements related to codeine-containing analgesics are subject to extra restrictions in the joint *Pharmacy Council and Pharmaceutical Society Advertising Guidelines*, on the Council's and Society's websites.

Dummy boxes

8. The placement of dummy boxes of codeine containing analgesics on over the counter shelves could be viewed as a form of advertising and could in some instances, be seen as a breach of a pharmacist's obligations to prevent misuse of substances of abuse. A pharmacist must be able to refuse the sale of any product that is unsuitable for a patient or where misuse is suspected.
9. By permitting a customer to self-select a codeine containing analgesic dummy box the patient has already made a decision about the choice of analgesic and it then may be more difficult for the pharmacist to decline the sale. It is preferable for the pharmacist to make a clinical decision regarding the most appropriate choice of analgesia for the patient in response to patient symptoms and medical history.

Code of Ethics 2017

10. The Council's Code of Ethics 2017 addresses the sale of products of potential misuse in many clauses:
 - *“Clause 1F – Acts to prevent harm to the patient and the public.*
 - *Clause 1G – promotes the safe, judicious and efficacious use of medicines, and prevents the supply of unnecessary and/or excessive quantities of medicines, or any product which may cause harm.*
 - *Clause 1H- before recommending, supplying or promoting a medicine, complementary and/or alternative medicine or other healthcare product or service, considers available evidence, and only supplies a product then satisfied that it is appropriate, and the person understands how to use it correctly and safely.*
 - *Clause 3F- promotes professional and environmental responsibility and accountability for the control, procurement, preparation, handling, supply, storage and disposal of medicines and other healthcare products.*
 - *Clause 4H- ensures that when providing any medicine, complementary and alternative medicine, or other healthcare product or service, that the health and wellbeing of the patient or consumer is the primary consideration, and that the benefit of use outweigh the risk.*

What is an appropriate supply?

11. Pharmacists should not engage in the sale of multiple packets of codeine containing analgesics in one transaction or repeat, frequent sales to one patient. This practice is likely to breach the Council's Code of Ethics 2017. There may be limited situations when a subsequent sale is necessary, for example when access to medical or dental care is not immediately available.
12. Treatment for a period of up to one week can be considered appropriate in certain circumstances but, medical attention is essential if a longer period of treatment is requested.
13. Pharmacists are experienced health professionals and highly qualified medicines experts capable of using clinical and ethical judgement to assess the patient and recommend the most appropriate analgesic for patient management.

14. It is essential that pharmacists adhere to the highest practice standards to ensure patient and public safety.

Effective date

15. Effective: February 2016 (updated December 2017).