



National Prescribing Service Limited

MEDIA RELEASE

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National Census revealing extent of medicines use problems

Preliminary data from the National Census of Medicines Use in Australia shows a significant number of adverse medicines events aren't being reported to GPs and people are struggling to identify information sources they can easily understand.

The Census, being conducted by the National Prescribing Service (NPS) and University of Melbourne, focuses on how Australians use their medicines, including prescription, non-prescription and complementary medicines.

It is the first national census to survey what combinations of medicines people take, how people find information about medicines and whether they have experienced problems with their choices.

"We're already seeing a breadth of medicines use issues experienced by Australians. Many of these issues can be solved, and the information collected in this Census will help us determine the best ways to do so," NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes said.

Analysis of data collected so far shows:

- A significant number of participants are reporting it's difficult to find information about medicines they understand
- More than half the participants have reported the volume of information sources about medicines makes it hard to know what is accurate
- Many participants who used a medicine in the past year reported a side effect, reaction or other problem with their medicines during this time

"Data from this Census will be integral to NPS programs over coming years and will assist other organisations in the health sector when developing new resources and programs for the community."

"We are grateful to the over 1000 people who have participated in the Census so far and hope others who are invited to participate will realise the value of their contribution," Dr Weekes said.

This Census began in July 2009 and involves people aged over 50 years. This final phase ends in March and the full results will be published later in the year. A second phase involving people aged 18-49 will begin later in 2010.

Consumers with questions about medicines can call the [NPS Medicines Line](tel:1300888763) on 1300 888 763 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm EST) and talk to a pharmacist for the cost of a local call (mobiles may cost more).

People who experience an adverse medicines event can report this to the Adverse Medicines Events line on 1300 134 237, (Mon-Fri 9-5pm EST). Please note this is not an emergency service.

For further information visit www.nps.org.au/research/medicinescensus

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