



National Prescribing Service Limited

MEDIA RELEASE

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***Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign launch**

On 27 October National Prescribing Service (NPS) will be launching its *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign, which aims to provide consumers with independent information so they can make an informed choice when it comes to generic medicines.

This multi-faceted campaign, which is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, includes an integrated series of television commercials, online resources and marketing, in-pharmacy advertising, and a tool kit for community pharmacy staff to support them when discussing generic medicines options with consumers. It also includes a range of community-based activities that will focus on seniors and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The television commercials, which include two 30-second and two 15-second features, will air for two weeks on all commercial stations in regional and metropolitan areas across Australia.

Each commercial features a person discussing generic medicines and the key messages that **generic medicines are an equal choice** and **they contain the same active ingredient**. Secondary messages include that generic medicines meet the same Government standards, there are often cost benefits associated with choosing the generic option, and the importance of talking to a doctor or pharmacist about generic medicines.

"The *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign aims to dispel myths that generic medicines work differently to the original brand medicines they replace," NPS Deputy CEO, Karen Kaye, said.

"As part of Australian Government regulations, the Therapeutic Goods Administration requires generic medicines to be stringently assessed to ensure they contain the same active ingredient as the original brands and that they work in the body in the same way. They also have to meet the same Government standards on how they have been manufactured and packaged."

When a generic medicine is available and a doctor or pharmacist has decided it is safe for a consumer to switch to the generic brand, it is important the consumer understands what this means.

"Generic medicines do not always look the same as the brand name or other generic brands of the same medicine. They may be a different size, shape or colour. This is because while the active ingredient is the same, the inactive ingredients, for example coatings and binders, may be different, however they do not affect how the medicine works," Ms Kaye said.

"Some prescription medicines have several different generic brands, and the consumer may not always receive the same one. For this reason it is vital consumers speak to their pharmacist or GP about their medicine so they learn how to identify their medicines. By being familiar with the active ingredient name, consumers are reassured that the medicine they are taking contains the active ingredient their doctor prescribed. From this, consumers can make informed decisions and reduce the risk of potential confusion and medicine misadventure," she said.

For more information on generic medicines consumers should visit www.nps.org.au or call Medicines Line on 1300 888 763.

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Media enquiries to Katie Butt, Media Adviser, on 0419 618 365 or email kbutt@nps.org.au.

The National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) is an independent, non-profit organisation for Quality Use of Medicine funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.



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Background information

This campaign is funded by the Australian Government as part of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Reforms package, which aims to give Australians continued access to new medicines while ensuring the PBS remains affordable into the future.

The main changes, which came into effect on 1 August 2008, relate specifically to pharmacy and pharmaceutical wholesaler compensation arrangements. As a result it is anticipated consumers will be more frequently offered the generic brand medicine option when getting a prescription dispensed, making it important they have access to information which will help them make an informed decision.

NPS agreed to run this campaign because it ties in neatly with the organisation's core aims and values, which are to provide accurate, balanced, evidence-based information and services to help people choose if, when and how to use medicines to improve their health and wellbeing.

The NPS campaign aims to ensure people know that a generic medicine contains the same active ingredient as the original brand of medicine and that they know where and how to find accurate information so they can make informed choices about generic medicines.

NPS has provided community pharmacies with resources to assist them in discussing the choices of generic medicines, the active ingredient and the possible cost savings that generic medicines have. This includes new ancillary labels to go on medicine packs once a medicine has been dispensed that state the active ingredient and what brand medicine it replaces.

This campaign launches off the success of 2007 campaigns which won an International Gold Quill Award for Excellence, the 2008 Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) NSW State Award for Excellence and the PRIA National Golden Target Award. NPS is also a finalist in the Marketing Institute of Australia's Marketing Excellence Awards.