



National Prescribing Service Limited



Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

5 February 2009

Generic medicines messages target Chinese and Italian communities

Seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be targeted in the third phase of the National Prescribing Service Limited's (NPS) *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign.

Community service announcements and interviews with health professionals will be broadcast from February in Cantonese, Mandarin and Italian on SBS and other community-language radio stations across Australia, while printed in-language resources are being developed in partnership with the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) and will be available in March.

The key message during this phase of the campaign is that generic medicines are an equal choice. They contain the same active ingredient as the original brand medicines, although they may look different or come in different packaging. Generic medicines also meet the same Australian Government standards as other medicines.

"Around 70 per cent of Australians are on at least one prescription medicine or non-prescription medicine at any given time, which increases to 90 per cent for people over 65 years," NPS Community Quality Use of Medicines Program Manager, Hannah Baird, said.

"Generic brands are now available for many medicines - both prescription and non-prescription, so people are being offered these brands more frequently. An awareness campaign about generic medicines has been running since July 2008, but the translation of the messages into Italian and Chinese may result in a slightly different meaning."

"Language barriers should not prevent people from understanding and having access to information about medicines," Ms Baird said.

NPS and FECCA have undertaken research which highlights the need for more accessible information around generic medicines for Italian and Chinese seniors.

"This campaign is an important means of enhancing awareness and dispelling misconceptions about generic medicines and ensuring diverse Australians have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their health," FECCA Director, Peter van Vliet said.

"Receiving accurate and reliable information about medicines is essential to achieving positive health outcomes. Yet for culturally and linguistically diverse seniors, such information may be difficult to access due to language barriers, low levels of cultural competency of some health services, or the experience of navigating unfamiliar medicines systems", Mr van Vliet said.

Seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are encouraged to speak to their doctor or pharmacist to discuss whether there may be a generic medicine suitable for them.

People needing to speak to a qualified pharmacist about medicines can call the NPS Medicines Line on 1300 888 763, Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm (EST) for the cost of a local call. If an interpreter is required, call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask to speak to the NPS Medicines Line. NPS Medicines Line is not an emergency service.

Media enquiries to Katie Butt, NPS Media Adviser, 0419 618 365 or email kbutt@nps.org.au; or to Peter van Vliet, FECCA Director, 0421 558 544.

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

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.