

get to know your medicines

National Awareness Campaign Newsletter

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'The Australian Medical Association (AMA) supports the NPS *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign and encourages doctors to discuss generic medicines options with their patients.'

Associate Professor John Gullotta AM, GP and Chair, Federal AMA Therapeutics Committee.

This campaign is endorsed by:



Generic medicines are an equal choice commences 16 September

The first stage of the quality use of medicines campaign, launched 6 August, raised awareness of the issues associated with medicines. This second stage of the campaign focuses on generic medicines.

Television commercials which were screened in August encouraged viewers to think about their medicines usage including complementary medicines, such as herbal remedies and vitamin supplements.

The generic medicines television commercials screening in September focus on the key message '*Generic medicines are an equal choice*'.

Both commercials end with a prompt to speak to your doctor or pharmacist, call Medicines Line or go to www.nps.org.au for more information.

Feedback from stage 1

Following the television commercials in August, Medicines Line has experienced up to four times more calls than usual and to date 800 organisations and consumers have

ordered in excess of 300,000 free resources (see inside for resources).

Callers to Medicines Line wanted to know more about the medications they were taking and what the potential side effects could be.

Why generic medicines?

- Research shows that 91% of consumers are aware of generic medicines, and of those up to 79% would consider using generic prescription medicines in the future, but don't necessarily have the confidence to do so.¹
- NPS aims to ensure that consumers and health professionals have confidence in using generic medicines when it is appropriate to do so and to help avoid confusion when generic brands are offered.
- *Generic medicines are an equal choice.* Generic medicines contain the same active ingredient as the original brand of medicine. If a generic medicine on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is said to be bioequivalent then it has the same active ingredient as the brand medicine and the same amount of medicine is available in the body to give the same effect.

What is a generic medicine?

The pharmaceutical company that first develops a medicine takes out a patent to ensure its exclusive right to produce and market it. After the patent expires, other manufacturers can market a medicine with the same active ingredient. These later medicines are called generic medicines.

A doctor or pharmacist can advise:

- Which generic medicines are listed on the PBS as equivalent to the original brand.
- Whether you can switch to a generic medicine.

Generic medicines are different in some ways – they may have different inactive ingredients such as fillers, are likely to have different packaging, may be a different colour and a different shape or may be capsules instead of tablets.

When considering generic medicines NPS advise there are some medicines which may not be suitable for switching from original brand to a generic medicine, and other medicines which may require extra care before switching. Also, not all medicines have a generic equivalent.

People who are allergic to an inactive substance – such as gluten, lactose or preservatives – in a generic medicine should avoid that medicine.

Message from health professionals and consumers:

"If you are thinking of switching to a generic medicine, '*Get to know your medicines*', talk with your pharmacist and ask your doctor, so you can be assured you and your health professional are making the most appropriate choices for you."

Pictured left to right: Dr Parisa Aslani, community pharmacist; Dr Guan Yeo, general practitioner; Diane Walsh, consumer representative.



National Prescribing Service Limited

Medicines information line for consumers



Frequently asked questions and answers for consumers

Are there problems with people using generic medicines?

No more than other branded medicines. Problems can arise with all medicines, sometimes because of lack of awareness and not knowing which questions to ask about the medicine. Careful explanation by a doctor or pharmacist can help to avoid these problems.

If patients are discharged from hospital or visit a doctor or pharmacist that they don't usually go to, they may be prescribed a different brand of the medicine they usually use. Several different brand names can be confusing. Be sure to check the active ingredient and strength on the label to avoid accidentally taking a double dose.

NPS encourages consumers to look at NPS's range of fact sheets, in particular 'Talking to your doctor and pharmacist' so you can *Get to know your medicines* and be aware of potential issues, then ask your doctor, pharmacist, or call Medicines Line to learn about the generic medicine choices available for you.

How do I get to know my medicines better?

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist or call Medicines Line 1300 888 763.
- Attend a free information session for people over 50 delivered by peer educators such as Mike Watson (pictured opposite). The sessions encourage discussion on what is a generic medicine, how they are approved for sale and why it is important to speak to your doctor or pharmacist about generic medicines. Refer to the *Get to know your medicines* brochure on the opposite page for further details.
- Order fact sheets and a Medicines List.
- Subscribe to MedicinesTalk, a quarterly newsletter written by consumers for consumers.

For more information see the resources opposite and visit *Get to know your medicines* at www.nps.org.au

Does Medicines Line give information about generic medicines?

Yes. Medicines Line offers consumers independent information and reassurance about generic medicines. Medicines Line pharmacists can help callers who may be concerned about switching brands. Where appropriate, Medicines Line pharmacists will refer callers to their pharmacist or doctor.

1 Roy Morgan Research, 2005; *Consumer Tracking Research: Changes in Generic Medicine Usage & Attitudes*; Stancombe Research & Planning, Dec 2005.

Medicines information line for health professionals



TAIS

Therapeutic Advice & Information Service
1300 138 677

Frequently asked questions and answers for health professionals

What is NPS saying about generic medicines?

Generic medicines are an equal choice. All bioequivalent brands are expected to produce a similar clinical effect to the original brand. Only medicines that have been proven to be bioequivalent can be switched one for another.

For more information about generic medicines see:

- Australian Prescriber (April 2007 Vol 30 No 2), Frequently asked questions about generic medicines.
- Australian Prescriber (August 2003 Vol 26 No 4), Generics – equal or not?
- Kalisch LM, Roughead EE, Gilbert AL. Pharmaceutical brand substitution in Australia – are there multiple switches per prescription? *Aust NZ J Public Health* 31(4), 348-352.
- NPS news No. 44: Generic Medicines: Same difference? (January 2006). NPS News 55 (December 2007) also discusses generic medicines.

What does NPS ask doctors and pharmacists to do?

- Where appropriate, discuss generic medicines options with their patients when prescribing medicines, and offer generic medicines choices whenever it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Consider the patient's needs, for example, whether brand switching may cause confusion.
- Encourage the patient to be familiar with the active ingredient of their medicine (e.g. where to find it on the label).

NPS supports best pharmacy practice. When filling repeats, offer the customer the same brand. This may be the original brand medicine or a generic medicine.

Does NPS provide education modules about generics medicines?

Yes:

- NPS, in consultation with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), and Society of Hospital Pharmacists Australia (SHPA), has developed an education module for pharmacy assistants, due for release later this year. The module will help pharmacy assistants practice quality use of medicines when dealing with enquiries about generic medicines.
- NPS in conjunction with COTA organisations has written a generic medicine training module for senior peer educators. The module includes information about active ingredients and the strict government standards required for all medicines in Australia, including generic medicines. It also encourages consumers to talk with their doctor or pharmacist about generic medicines.

NPS acknowledges the valuable contribution of the following program partners in the development of generic medicines resources:





Mike Watson, peer educator and pharmacist

Quality Use of Medicines means:

- Selecting management options wisely
- Choosing a suitable medicine if a medicine is considered necessary
- Using medicines safely and effectively

Resources – orders within Australia are free



MEDIMATE BROCHURES (DL)

Medimate brochures help consumers understand and use medicines in partnership with their doctor, pharmacist, nurse and other health professional.

AVAILABLE IN: English, Chinese and English, Greek and English, Italian and English, Vietnamese and English.



CONSUMER MEDICINE INFORMATION (CMI GUIDE) A4

NPS provides a guide to how to use the CMI about each medicine.

A CMI is produced by the pharmaceutical company that makes the particular medicine. They may be included in the medicine package, but can always be requested from the pharmacist or doctor, or are available at www.nps.org.au

The guide to CMIs shows how to find the important facts to know before, during and after taking the medicine.



GET TO KNOW YOUR MEDICINES FREE INFORMATION BROCHURE

NPS has developed a generic medicines community information sessions module, which is presented by COTA (Council on the Ageing) peer educators free of charge. The sessions are available to seniors (anyone over 50) groups, clubs and individuals.

To book sessions contact the Seniors Peer Education Centre in NSW and COTA organisations in other states and territories. See the brochure for more details.



GET TO KNOW YOUR MEDICINES FACT SHEETS (A4)

- Generic medicines.
- Are new medicines better?
- Read the label, it is important.
- Talking with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Remember to take your medicines.
- Using the internet to find reliable health information.
- What is a medicine?



MEDICINES LINE FRIDGE MAGNET ON CARD (DL)

Expands on the information provided on the front page of this newsletter.

NPS can also supply these brochures from the following organisations:



RUM Program:

RETURN YOUR UNWANTED MEDICINES (RUM) BROCHURE (DL)

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia:

HOME MEDICINES REVIEW BROCHURE (DL)



MEDICINESTALK NEWSLETTER (A4)

MedicinesTalk is a quarterly newsletter produced by consumers for consumers. Subscription is absolutely free posted directly to you. To subscribe go online to www.nps.org.au Bulk copies are available of the special 'Generic medicines explained' issue. Please see back of this page to order.



MEDICINES LIST AND WALLET

Medicines List enables consumers to carry a list of medicines wherever they go. The list folds neatly into a clear plastic wallet.

Online Only



AUSTRALIAN PRESCRIBER

Australian Prescriber is an independent publication providing readily accessible information about medicines. It covers topics assisting doctors, dentists, pharmacists and students. Go to www.australianprescriber.com to view the full text.

Online Only



NPS NEWS NO. 44 (JANUARY 2006) & 55 (DECEMBER 2007)

NPS News is distributed free of charge to all doctors and pharmacists, along with Australian Prescriber, six times a year. It provides succinct, independent information on therapeutic topics and is available at www.nps.org.au



Fax Order Form

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Or fax this form to 02 9283 2028

Inquiries: 02 8217 8700
 or email info@nps.org.au

Materials	Quantity	Fact Sheets (A4)	Quantity
Medimate (English)	<input type="text"/>	• Generic medicines	<input type="text"/>
Medimate (Chinese + English)	<input type="text"/>	• Are new medicines better?	<input type="text"/>
Medimate (Greek + English)	<input type="text"/>	• Read the label, it is important	<input type="text"/>
Medimate (Italian + English)	<input type="text"/>	• Talking with your doctor or pharmacist	<input type="text"/>
Medimate (Vietnamese + English)	<input type="text"/>	• Remember to take your medicines	<input type="text"/>
Medicines Line (fridge magnet with DL-card)	<input type="text"/>	• Using the internet	<input type="text"/>
Medicines List wallet	<input type="text"/>	• What is a medicine?	<input type="text"/>
Home Medicines Review (DL-brochure)	<input type="text"/>		
Return your Unwanted Medicines (DL-brochure)	<input type="text"/>	Consumer Medicine Information (A4-guide)	<input type="text"/>
Free information sessions (DL-brochure)	<input type="text"/>		

Get to Know Your Medicines Kits

Kit in box version (maximum copies one)

MedicinesTalk quarterly newsletter special issue 'Generic Medicines Explained'

Please use BLOCK LETTERS

Title (please cross) Miss Mrs Ms Mr Dr

Orders within Australia are free!

Given name

Family name

Business name (if applicable)

Address

Town or suburb

State or Territory Postcode Daytime phone number ()

Email address

Please tell us if you are

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General public | <input type="checkbox"/> Community organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> General Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> NPS Facilitator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer educator/co-ordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Community pharmacy | <input type="checkbox"/> NPS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's service | <input type="checkbox"/> School | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community / neighbourhood centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Nurse | <input type="text"/> |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="text"/> |