

Press Release

Australian Self-Medication Industry & Macquarie University Partnership: Uncovering the positive impact of self care on public health

Sydney, November 1, 2013: The Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) and Macquarie University have announced a joint research partnership that will produce for the very first time independent, evidence-based research into the current and future impact of self care and self-medication on public health in Australia.

The extensive research program, which will be conducted in three phases over the next 12 months by Professor Scott Koslow, will determine the consumer healthcare industry's value in the Australian economic and healthcare environment, critical insights into consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards self care, and the value of self care in contributing to a sustainable healthcare system in the future.

Dr Deon Schoombie, Executive Director, ASMI

A number of recent major reports into the health system have outlined the magnitude of the problem facing the healthcare system.¹⁻³ They all point to rising healthcare costs, increasing and unsustainable government expenditure on health, and a system under enormous pressure from growing demand for health services, especially due to an ageing population.

This research will provide a deeper understanding of the role of self care in driving better healthcare outcomes for Australians and how it can play a role in preparing for a more sustainable healthcare system, both now and in the future. We are proud to be partnering with Macquarie University to accelerate this understanding.

ASMI and Macquarie University Partnership Launch: Professor Sakkie Pretorius

Self care is aimed at empowering consumers through improved health literacy, and equipping them for the prevention and self-management of acute and chronic conditions. At its core is a shift from 'cure' to prevention, and a focus on activities and decisions that people make for themselves so that they maintain a good level of physical and mental health. This includes lifestyle, diet and exercise and appropriate use of medicines.

Non-prescription medicines (or consumer healthcare products), which include over-the-counter (OTC) products and complementary medicines, are a vital component of our nation's healthcare system. These are the medicines and products people often turn to first when illness strikes.

.../2

In many ways, consumers have been leading the way towards greater self care for some time. The fact that two-in-three Australians are using complementary medicines and a quarter of all Australians regularly seek health information online are strong indicators of their willingness to take on a more active role in their health.^{4,5}

With ageing populations and health conditions becoming increasingly chronic and complex, the healthcare challenges we face are significant. This research seeks to assert consumer sovereignty by providing the insights that will help policymakers understand the value of the consumer choice in their health decisions. It may even go a step further by providing the necessary evidence and impetus for the Australian government and key healthcare authorities to support the expansion of responsible self care practices across the country.

References

1. Healthcare: Reform or ration, Committee for Economic Development of Australia, April 2013.
2. Australia to 2050; future challenges, Commonwealth Government, 2010.
3. A healthier future for all Australians, National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, Final Report, June 2009.
4. Therapeutic Goods Regulation: Complementary Medicines, Australian National Audit Office [last accessed 20 August 2013].
5. Health information and health products online, Better Health Channel. Content approved by the Victorian State Government Department of Health, April 2013. [last accessed 20 August 2013].

ENDS

About Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI)

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the non-prescription consumer healthcare products industry. ASMI members are involved in the manufacture and distribution of a range of health and wellbeing products that include over-the-counter products and complementary medicines. These medicines are available without a prescription, in pharmacies, supermarkets and health food stores. ASMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy.