

Q&A FACT SHEET



The Facts On What Is Happening To Practitioner-Only Products?

Over the week, there has been information from various organisations about government restricting access to practitioner-only products. Some of the information has been inaccurate and emotionally-laden, resulting in anxiety and fear amongst practitioners.

ATMS has sent communications to both inform and update members on what is really happening. In order to quell the 'flood' of misinformation, the following is offered to assist ATMS members understand the facts.

What Is This About?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Canberra has issued a discussion paper on a number of proposals to reform the weaknesses in the current advertising of medicines. One of the proposals includes practitioner-only products (POPs). POPs are primarily used by some herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths.

What Has Advertising Got To Do With Practitioner-Only Products?

POPs are herbal medicines, nutritional supplements and homoeopathic medicines which do not have on the label the diseases for which the medicine is used. As labels on medicines come under the jurisdiction of TGA advertising, POPs are also governed by the advertising rules.

What Does The TGA Want To Do?

The TGA has proposed two options for POPs. The First Option is that the current system remains. The Second Option is that advertising of POPs can only be aimed at government registered practitioners.

What Is the Current Situation?

Currently, 'complementary practitioners' are exempt from the TGA advertising code (under 'Appendix 2' of the Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code 2007), meaning you can advertise a products specifics, claims and actions to health-care professionals (naturopaths, homeopaths, herbalists and nutritionists etc.) but not the general public. The reason for this is that practitioners should be fully informed of any natural medicine and won't be as easily misled.

What Will The Second Option Mean?

Should Option Two of Proposal 6 go ahead, advertising of POPs will only be available to healthcare professionals who are government registered under a National Registration Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). Advertising to unregistered practitioners would be regulated in the same way as advertising is regulated to the general public. At this stage: herbalists, naturopaths, nutritionists and homeopaths are not government registered.

If Option Two Goes Ahead, Will I No Longer Have Access To My Medicines?

No. It is important to stress that the proposed change is actually around the **advertising** of POPs to practitioners and not the **supply** of these products.

However, ATMS is very aware that POPs are a critical tool for the vast majority of

clinicians, without POPs many practitioners would simply not survive. ATMS is opposed to the proposed changes and will be insisting in our response that the status quo remain.

How Can I Tell If I Am Using A POP?

Firstly, POPs have the words 'Practitioner Only Medicine' on the label. Secondly, a POP is a formula made up of several ingredients. Thirdly, the label does not list the diseases for the formula. Fourthly, a POP is not available to the general public.

Who Can I Ask If A Medicine Is A POP?

The best authority is the either the manufacturer or distributor of the medicine.

Is There Any Impact If I Do Not Use POPs?

No.

I Have Heard That Our Medical Devices Will Be Taken Away. Is This True?

No. The TGA is considering whether advertisements of high risk medical devices e.g. artificial limbs, pacemakers etc. should be made to the general public. We do not use high risk medical devices.

Is It True That Practitioners Will Not Be Able To Discuss Diseases With Patients?

No. The TGA only deals with medicines, not with clinical practice. The proposed reforms only deal with the advertising of medicines, and nothing to do with clinical practice.

Should I Sign A Petition To Have Us Government Registered?

The government registration of a healthcare occupation is a complex process that takes years. The government has its own criteria by which it assesses whether an occupation should be registered or not. The reality is that signing a registration petition will not bring about registration.

Why Is ATMS Not Telling Their Members To Write to Politicians?

Firstly, these are just proposals – no decision has been made. If you write to a politician now, the response you will get is that the proposals are open for consultation. Secondly, the government will shortly be going into caretaker mode due to the coming elections, so government business will come to a halt. Thirdly, we are waiting for feedback from our submissions to gain the complete picture of all the facts. Fourthly, the politician you write to may not be in office after the elections.

What Is The ATMS Position?

ATMS' position is that our members must be able to continue advertising of POPs to health-care practitioners. We have been using POPs since 1990, and there is no evidence of problems.

How Will I Be Kept Informed?

ATMS will provide updates to members primarily via the website, as well as email and Facebook as developments occur.

Who Do I Contact For More Information?

Contact the ATMS office, by either telephone or email, for clarification of the above information or an update on developments.

Contact the manufacturer or distributor if you want information about an actual medicine.

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