

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Research to understand the effects of codeine sales restrictions

A University of Tasmania research project will seek to understand how codeine sales restrictions will affect codeine consumers and health professionals and are asking affected people to answer a questionnaire.

In August this year, the Therapeutic Goods Administration made the interim decision to move all over the counter codeine medications to prescription-only medicines (Schedule 4).

This interim decision was made on the basis of concerns regarding risk of dependence and side-effects with codeine use and the known availability of safer over the counter products.

The research team, University of Tasmania PhD candidate in the School of Psychology Jacqui McCoy, supervisor Associate Professor Raimondo Bruno and Dr Suzanne Nielsen from the University of New South Wales, developed a questionnaire for health professionals and people who use codeine.

“This research will be critical in understanding more broadly the perspectives of those who will be affected by this decision,” Jacqui McCoy said.

“Our questions were informed by the broader research literature on over the counter codeine use and the key concerns and benefits of the decision identified in the public submissions submitted to the TGA.”

Based on the public submissions provided to the TGA, key concerns around the impact of this decision involve:

- The large amount of time and expense for people to regularly obtain a codeine prescription from the GP;
- Concerns that people will experience emotional and physical distress because their pain will not be managed in an adequate or timely way.

- Concerns that people may resort to other pain management methods (e.g., alcohol use).

In contrast, perceived benefits include:

- Better pain management and support for those who experience chronic pain with regular GP visits;
- The number of people experiencing side-effects from codeine could reduce, as could the number of people who are dependent or at risk of becoming dependent on codeine.

Those affected are encouraged to fill out the survey, which can be found on the University of Tasmania website. Click [here](#) visit surveys.edu.au.