



# The South African Pharmacy Council

Dear Pharmacist

## **RE: MISUSE AND ABUSE OF CODEINE-CONTAINING PREPARATIONS**

The deliberate misuse and abuse of codeine-containing preparations continues to be a matter of concern around the world.

Regulatory authorities have proposed controls ranging from moving codeine based products to prescription-only status, as in Mauritius, to the cancellation of the registration of liquid codeine-containing preparations, as in Malaysia.

In South Africa, Schedule 2 of the Medicines and Related Substances Act, Act 101 of 1965, permits the pharmacist to supply certain codeine-containing products without a prescription. While it is possible that this may change in the future, at this stage it is acknowledged that these products may be useful in self-medication if used appropriately and responsibly.

The pharmacist's intervention in such sales is critical. A pharmacist who has not ensured that the product is appropriate for the condition for which it was bought, or who has indiscriminately sold products that may be misused or abused, may be guilty of not exercising proper or reasonable care in controlling the sale of the medicine.

In recent months, the Pharmacy Council's disciplinary procedures have dealt with a number of complaints about pharmacists who have supplied codeine-containing preparations injudiciously. It is clear that Council has a responsibility to deal severely with pharmacists who are implicated in uncontrolled sale of codeine-containing products.

The Pharmacy Council would like to appeal to all pharmacists to assist in controlling this problem. Complying with legislative requirements, in particular those that require a pharmacist to intervene in the sale of Schedule 2 medicines will go a long way towards minimising the availability of abused medicines. Failure by pharmacists to apply proper discretion over the sale of such medication could well lead to such discretionary powers being removed by the regulatory authority.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

T A MASANGO  
REGISTRAR