



MEDIA RELEASE

Complementary Healthcare Council Raises Concern about Quality Use of Medicines

This Complementary Healthcare Council is concerned new mandatory requirements for unit pricing of complementary medicines may mislead consumers and affect the quality use of medicines. A new Unit Pricing Code will apply to all complementary and over-the-counter medicines that are sold in grocery stores and supermarkets.

“We do not believe it is appropriate for consumers to choose medicines based solely on price alone. There are various formulations of complementary medicines which have different therapeutic claims, dosages and ingredients; these are things to consider when selecting your complementary medicine” said Complementary Healthcare Council Executive Director, Dr Wendy Morrow.

“Not only do complementary medicines contain different ingredients at varying strengths, they can also be designed for different subsets of the population, such as women, men, athletes, pregnant women, and children. For example, two different brands of a multivitamin designed for pregnancy may differ considerably and should be purchased on the needs of each individual” she added.

The Complementary Healthcare Council considers that the new Code, by emphasising price, may lead consumers to believe that a cheaper product is identical to another higher-priced product and will provide the same health benefits.

“We strongly urge that the mandatory requirement for Unit Pricing of complementary and other medicines sold in these retail outlets be reconsidered, and listed as exempt within the Code, to ensure appropriate consumer choice.

The Complementary Healthcare Council recommends that consumers who are unsure about selecting complementary medicines should seek advice from their healthcare practitioner, health food retailer, or pharmacist.”

Details of the Unit Pricing Code are available at: <http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/878372>

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