

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000317

OUTCOME: 5 - Regulation, Safety and Protection

Topic: Codeine

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Watt, Murray

Question:

- a) How many transactions of codeine were recorded last year?
- b) What is the trend around codeine use – has it been increasing?"

Answer:

- a) The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) does not collect data on the number of transactions for therapeutic goods. Information provided to the TGA by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (PGA) for use in the codeine regulation impact statement (RIS) indicated that during eight months in 2016 over 2.7 million over-the-counter (OTC) codeine transactions were recorded by approximately 65 per cent of pharmacies across Australia. Other data from the pharmaceutical industry concludes that over 21 million packs of codeine-containing products are sold every year.
- b) According to data provided by the PGA, between July and September 2016 there was a 38 per cent increase in the number of codeine transactions recorded per pharmacy.

A recent 2016 study [Berterame, S. *et al.* 2016 'Use of and barriers to access to opioid analgesics: a worldwide, regional, and national study.' *The Lancet* 387 (10028), 1644-1656] indicates that the use of opioid analgesics increased considerably over a decade (2001-2013), with Australia showing some of the most significant increases in opioid consumption for pain management behind Germany, North America, Austria and Gibraltar.

The RIS advises that codeine-related deaths increased from 3.5 to 8.7 deaths per million persons between 2000 and 2009. Just under half of the deaths were attributed to accidental overdose, and the rate of these deaths also increased significantly by 9.3 per cent each year.