MEDIA RELEASE 10 September 2008

Get to know your medicines campaign for multicultural seniors

Seniors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, in rural and metropolitan areas, are over-represented in statistics regarding adverse medicine events.

To help reduce the incidence of medicine-related harms, from 1 September 2008 Chinese and Italian speaking seniors are the focus of the National Prescribing Service (NPS) “Get to know your medicines” campaign being conducted in partnership with the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA).

“Seniors tend to have higher health needs than the rest of the population and use more medicines. Language and cultural differences can pose further challenges to accessing appropriate medicines information, leading to a higher incidence of accidents when using medicines. We are hoping to build on the 2007 “Get to know your medicines” campaign by providing greater access to reliable medicines information for these seniors,” said National Prescribing Service Acting CEO, Karen Kaye.

“Poor English language proficiency often presents a barrier to accessing health information and services”, said FECCA Chairperson, Voula Messimeri. “Having access to such information and services is vital to the health and well-being of all Australians, irrespective of their cultural or linguistic background. This campaign provides an important opportunity to promote skills and knowledge around using medicines safely to seniors from Italian and Chinese backgrounds”.

Australia-wide, it is estimated that more than 140,000 people are hospitalised every year as a result of medication-related problems. There is evidence that between 50 and 70 percent of medicine-related hospitalisations are potentially preventable.

Since 2004, NPS has been working in partnership with FECCA to increase the awareness and skills of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds so they are better able to manage their medicines. This partnership brings together NPS’s expertise as Australia’s peak, independent education and information provider about medicines and FECCA’s expertise as the peak national body representing Australia’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Approximately 77 community education seminars will be hosted by Chinese and Italian organisations and a range of materials have been developed in the target languages. These materials include: a Medicines List to help people keep track of their medicines, a list of questions to ask the doctor or pharmacist about medicines, and the Medimate brochure, which provides information about using medicines safely.

To order these translated materials – at no cost – or to find out about local times and dates for the education seminars email languages@nps.org.au. Some resources are also available in Greek and Vietnamese.

Community radio stations are encouraged to play the in-language radio advertisements as community service announcements.

DEFINITION: An adverse medicine event can be defined as “an unintended event due to the use of a medicine that could have harmed or did harm the patient”. Harm includes physical, psychological, or emotional suffering. A senior is defined as those over 50 years of age.

NPS is a non-profit organisation, independent of Government and the pharmaceutical industry. NPS works with doctors, health professionals, government, industry and consumers to improve health through Quality Use of Medicines. The information NPS provides is based on critical analyses of current evidence, and is consistent with nationally recognised guidelines. NPS is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

FECCA is the peak, national body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. FECCA’s role is to advocate, lobby and promote issues on behalf of its constituency to government, business and the broader community.

ENDS

Media enquiries to the media manager: Elayn James on 02 8217 8784 (bh), 0419 618 365 or ejames@nps.org.au
Resources available to media: See over for resources
- Version 2: MP3 Radio spot in Mandarin, Cantonese and Italian - see

- Questions & Answers for interviews with bilingual health professionals –

- Medicine resources for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds – see

- “Translated materials” order form – see