



Medicine Misadventure

The Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) at its meeting in May 2008 discussed the use of generic medicines. Some particularly troubling reports have been received due to consumers not being given clear and adequate information. One such incidence involved an elderly woman who had been using a brand name heart medication and had this replaced with a generic brand of the same medication when next having her prescription filled. The patient was advised that the generic brand medication “does the same thing” but misunderstood this to mean that it strengthened her existing medication and made the result even better. Consequently she took generic branded medication in the prescribed dose and continued taking brand name heart medication. The result was hospitalization for the elderly woman as a consequence of the medicine misadventure.

The NPS has requested the APC’s support in reminding all pharmacists that they must draw the patient’s attention to the name of the active ingredient every time a dispensed medication is handed out. In addition, pharmacists have a responsibility to ensure that all relevant pharmacy staff are competent to carry out this function.

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