



British Association of  
Pharmaceutical Wholesalers

**PRESS RELEASE**

British Association of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers  
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## **Joint guidance to ease stock shortages published**

**BAPW, UK, 12 November 2009**

Representatives of wholesalers, manufacturers, pharmacists and dispensing doctors have reached an agreement with the medicines supply chain regulator, the MHRA, and the Department of Health, to endorse and support the promotion of joint guidelines explaining the existing legal and ethical obligations in relation to the trading of medicines when they are in short supply.

The obligations, outlined in the guidance note *Trading Medicines for Human Use: Shortages and Supply Chain Obligations*, outline the key legal and ethical obligations on manufacturers, wholesalers, NHS Trusts, registered pharmacies and dispensing doctors in relation to the supply and trading of medicines. Recent increases in the export of medicines are a major contributor to supply problems and risk jeopardising patient care.

There is an existing framework in legislation to control the appropriate and continued supply of medicines to patients in the UK. Both manufacturers and wholesalers, who are licensed to trade in the UK, have a legal duty to ensure that UK patient needs are met and pharmacists and dispensing doctors have ethical obligations to ensure the needs of patients are always put first.

Martin Sawer, Executive Director, said:

“This is good news for patients, because all relevant parties now have agreed that they must work together to improve their understanding of, and obligations for, a continuous medicines supply in the UK. All parties will have to stand up for and explain this complicated but, up to now, efficient delivery mechanism for NHS medicines. It is encouraging that all appropriate players have signed up to these guidelines and this supply chain group will now continue its work by trying to identify further action that can be taken to remove the threat of medicines shortages and lessen the burden on all parts of the supply chain.

“This is a complex issue - there is no easy solution. It is perfectly legal to import and export UK medicines in line with the EU Single Market – indeed supply chain competition and cost efficiencies have resulted, benefitting the NHS. But UK patients must come first.

“As part of the requirement to ensure a continuous supply of medicines, as mandated by EU law, the BAPW believes that it would be timely to consider the idea of ‘full-line wholesaling’ becoming

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formally recognised as a public service in the UK, as is the case in some other EU countries. It is interesting to note that Germany has recently legislated for this.”

**ENDS**

## Notes to Editors

- The British Association of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers (BAPW) is the trade association for an essential, but often overlooked, part of the medicines supply chain – full-line wholesalers. We have 10 members: AAH Pharmaceuticals Ltd., F.Maltby & Sons Ltd., Mawdsley-Brooks & Co. Ltd., Norchem Ltd., Phoenix Healthcare Distribution Ltd., P.I.F. Medical Supplies Ltd., Sangers (Maidstone) Ltd., Sangers (Northern Ireland) Ltd., Co-operative Pharmacy National Distribution Centre Ltd and Alliance Healthcare Ltd.
- We continue to work with the MHRA to demonstrate the role that wholesalers play in the safe delivery of 2 billion medicines each year across the UK; in order that patients can receive their medicines when they want them and where they want them.
- The joint statement on *Trading Medicines for Human Use: Shortages and Supply Chain Obligations* has been jointly published by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, the British Association of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers, the Department of Health, the Dispensing Doctors’ Association, the Ethical Medicines Industry Group, the General Practitioners Committee of the British Medical Association, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the National Pharmacy Association, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
- It is anticipated that the Minister of State for Health Services, Mike O’Brien MP will use his speech at the ABPI Autumn conference on the 12th November to publicise the statement.
- Once launched, it will be possible to access the statement via the organisations that have endorsed it. The BAPW will be making it available for download from its website at [www.bapw.net](http://www.bapw.net).

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