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Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drug Scheduling Changes

Ottawa – January 6, 2006 - The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA), following the advice of their Scheduling Committee, has approved revisions to the drug scheduling for pseudoephedrine- and ephedrine-based OTC medications.

Effective April 10, 2006, the following changes to the scheduling will take effect:

- All single-entity pseudoephedrine products (i.e. where pseudoephedrine is the sole active ingredient) will be assigned to Schedule II. Products in Schedule II are placed behind the pharmacy counter and can only be acquired after consultation with a pharmacist.
- All single-entity ephedrine products will also be assigned to Schedule II.
- Any combination product that includes either pseudoephedrine or ephedrine as one of the active ingredients will be assigned to Schedule III. Products in Schedule III are placed in the self-selection area of the pharmacy but cannot be sold in retail outlets other than a pharmacy.

These changes reflect an increased restriction to the access of these products due to their potential use in the manufacturing of methamphetamine (commonly referred to as “speed” or “crystal meth”). A majority of methamphetamine manufacturing is from large-scale operations that utilize bulk precursor compounds. However, increased controls being placed on bulk compounds are predicted to increase the demand for single-entity pseudoephedrine and ephedrine products as the preferred substitutes. Moving these single-entity products “behind the counter” in pharmacies will increase the surveillance, detect potential abuse, monitor sales quantities and reduce theft.