



Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 12 July 2019 for:

"In November 2018 the Medicines Classification Committee recommended that dextromethorphan be reclassified as pharmacy or restricted medicine.

I have read the submissions relating to the ingredient which Medsafe has published online, but cannot find any evidence presented regarding the harm from or abuse of cough lozenges.

As a result of the decision some variants of Vicks Cough Lozenges and Strepsils are no longer able to be sold on the grocery shelf. These have been safely purchased from supermarkets for many years.

I seek under the OIA the lozenge-specific information and evidence that led the Medicines Classification Committee to determine that banning a number of lozenge variants from the supermarket sale was necessary. With what's been published there's nothing that spoke to the issue of dextromethorphan in the lozenge form. In particular, what was the harm from these cough lozenges that the committee believed to be occurring and sought to remedy. What steps did the committee take to consider the difference between liquids, capsules and lozenges."

The Medicines Classification Committee considered the proposal to reclassify dextromethorphan containing products to Pharmacist-Only medicine. This includes dextromethorphan in any dosage and form (including lozenges) that is used for coughs. We should note that the Committee can only consider the proposal put to them, and should not

consider any other options as these will not have been consulted on (such as having lozenges at a different classification).

I have attached the link to the Minutes of the meeting for your interest.

<https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/class/Minutes/2016-2020/mccMin2Nov2018.htm>

As the information requested is publicly available, your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act.

I trust that this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris James', is written over a faint horizontal line.

Chris James
Group Manager
Medsafe