

## **Top DH official confirms changes to dispensing regulations early in New Year**

16 November 2009: Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Dr Keith Ridge has confirmed that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will publish new guidelines that will amend the current regulations on dispensing errors early in the New Year.

In a letter to All-Party Pharmacy Group chair Dr Howard Stoate MP, Dr Ridge said that the new CPS guidance would be implemented while the drawn out process of reviewing and reforming the Medicines Act was underway. Dr Ridge was responding to a letter sent by Howard Stoate MP, asking for an update on progress, after the All-Party Pharmacy Group meeting on dispensing errors held in June, where Dr Ridge committed to taking action on the issue.

The news will be welcomed by the profession, which had been unsettled by the case of former pharmacy locum Elizabeth Lee, was handed a suspended prison sentence after dispensing the wrong drug.

Dr Howard Stoate MP, Chair of the All-Party Pharmacy Group said:

‘It is encouraging to have such a quick and positive response from the DH, and that Keith has committed to introducing this interim protocol early in the New Year. This is a hugely important issue, and one that everyone working within the pharmacy sector wants to see resolved as soon as possible. I feel confident that the DH is taking it seriously, and will be taking the necessary steps to ensure that pharmacists can continue doing a fantastic job delivering healthcare without this issue hanging over them. The Group will of course scrutinise the new regulations when they are introduced, to make sure that they do the job properly’.

END

For further information, please contact Toby Pellew at Luther Pendragon on 0207 618 9100 or [tobyp@luther.co.uk](mailto:tobyp@luther.co.uk)

Notes to Editors

- **Extract from the letter from Dr Keith Ridge to Howard Stoate MP**

**4<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

*“A full review of the Medicines Act and other existing medicines legislation is under-way and this will include consideration of changes that may be made to the law to clarify the issue. The MHRA is working closely with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and other stakeholders to ensure that the law provides the necessary safeguards for the public whilst being proportionate as to how instances of clinical error are dealt with. Any subsequent changes to the legislative framework must be comprehensive, comprehensible and fit for current purpose”.*

*“In the interim, the MHRA is fully committed to engagement with the Crown Prosecution Service to develop guidelines on cases where criminal charges in relation to these provisions may be considered.*

*To this end, officials from MHRA have met with the CPS and negotiations are now at an advanced stage. A draft set of guidelines has been prepared and is currently being reviewed by MHRA, their solicitors and the CPS”.*

*“Once guidelines have been agreed by the MHRA and CPS, they are likely to need approval from the Director of Public Prosecution and possibly the Attorney General before being formally established to guide CPS decision-making. I understand that this step may take a little time, but it is envisaged that the guidelines will be approved and published by early in the New Year”.*

- Howard Stoate MP wrote to Keith Ridge on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2009 – for more details on the letter please contact Toby Pellew at Luther Pendragon
- The APPG held a meeting examining the law on dispensing errors on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009 in the House of Commons.