



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
8 APR 2014**

**HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO 'HERBAL HEALTH JOINTCARE' FOUND TO
CONTAIN 5 UNDECLARED POTENT WESTERN MEDICINAL
INGREDIENTS, INCLUDING STEROID**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) alerts members of the public to the product 'Herbal Health Jointcare' which was found to contain five undeclared potent western medicinal ingredients including a steroid. The product claimed to contain natural herbal ingredients and to be steroid-free.

2 The product is marketed for the relief of joint pain associated with conditions such as rheumatism and arthritis, and sold by Ace Nutrition International over the Internet and at their premises at Kallang Pudding Road. It is also labelled as a product of Japan although investigations to date reveal that the source of the product cannot be ascertained. HSA had since seized the product from the company and stopped all sales of the product. Please refer to **Annex A** for pictures of the product.

3 HSA was alerted to the product when it received 2 reports of rapid pain relief associated with its use. The first, a woman in her 60s, experienced pain relief within two days after taking 'Herbal Health Jointcare' for frozen shoulder and joint pains. She informed her doctor and related similar experiences by her friends who consumed the same product. She is currently under review by her doctor for potential liver injury which could be related to the consumption of the product. The second report was made by a consumer who became suspicious of the product when it brought rapid pain relief to his mother after taking it for one week.

4 Members of the public who are taking 'Herbal Health Jointcare' are advised to consult a doctor as soon as possible. Due to the presence of the undeclared potent steroid in the product, consumers should seek medical advice before stopping the product on their own accord. Sudden discontinuation of 'Herbal Health Jointcare' could result in serious steroid withdrawal symptoms, such as confusion and low blood pressure.

5 The steroid, betamethasone-17-valerate, detected in the product is used for swelling and inflammatory conditions and should only be used under strict medical supervision. Long term unsupervised use of oral steroids can cause increased blood glucose levels leading to diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders, increased risk of infections and Cushing's syndrome, which is characterised by a round face or 'moon face', and upper body obesity with thin limbs.

6 Four other western medicinal ingredients, piroxicam, furosemide, chlorpheniramine and famotidine, detected in the product should also only be used under medical supervision. Inappropriate long term use of piroxicam, a potent painkiller, may affect the kidneys, liver and can cause heart problems in susceptible patients such as the elderly. Please refer to

Annex B for more information on the western medicinal ingredients found in this product and their potential side effects.

HSA advisory

7 Members of the public are advised on the following:

(i) To consult a doctor as soon as possible before they stop taking the product, if they have already consumed it. Sudden discontinuation of steroids without proper medical supervision may cause serious withdrawal symptoms such as weakness, fatigue, confusion and low blood pressure, especially when these products have been taken for more than a few weeks.

(ii) Be wary of complementary health products (eg, health supplements) providing unexpected rapid relief of their pain symptoms associated with their chronic conditions such as gout, arthritis and rheumatism. Complementary health products comprising natural ingredients are generally less potent than western medicines. Their effects are often not immediate and may only be seen after prolonged consumption.

(iii) Be wary of complementary health products carrying exaggerated claims or personal testimonials of miraculous cures of chronic ailments such as rheumatism and arthritis. 'Herbal Health Jointcare' claimed on its website that a 103-year-old grandmother was relieved of knee pains and able to get up from wheelchair and walk within 2 weeks of taking the product.

(iv) To seek proper medical treatment and not self-medicate if they have chronic pain ailments.

8 HSA will take strong enforcement actions against those engaged in the sale and supply of illegal health products. Anyone found selling complementary health products containing western medicinal ingredients faces a penalty fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for a period of up to two years under the Poisons Act.

9 Members of the public who have any information on the sale of the 'Herbal Health Jointcare' product or other illegal products may contact HSA's Enforcement Branch at Tel: 6866-3485 during office hours (Monday to Friday) or email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg.

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8 APRIL 2014

About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services and Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring

they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. As the national blood service, it is responsible for providing a safe and adequate blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

For more updates on public health and safety matters, follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/HSAsg.

About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards. It contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework.

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'Herbal Health Jointcare'



I. Information on the potent medicinal ingredients found in the 'Herbal Health Jointcare' that should only be prescribed by a doctor

Betamethasone-17-valerate

Betamethasone-17-valerate is a steroid used for inflammatory conditions and should only be used under strict medical supervision. Long term unsupervised use of oral corticosteroids can cause increased blood glucose levels leading to diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders, an increased risk of infections (due to lowered immunity) and Cushing's syndrome, which is characterised by a round face or 'moon face', and upper body obesity with thin limbs.

Furosemide

Furosemide is a potent diuretic drug that is used to eliminate water and salt from the body. Excessive 'water-eliminating' effect of furosemide can cause the depletion of sodium, chloride, body water and other minerals in the body.

Piroxicam

Piroxicam, is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) used to treat pain and inflammation in the body. It can cause gastrointestinal adverse effects such as nausea and vomiting and gastric bleeding as well as elevated liver enzymes. Other adverse effects on prolonged usage may include increased risk of heart problems and cause fluid retention.

II. Other medicinal ingredients

Chlorpheniramine and famotidine

Both chlorpheniramine and famotidine are available as Pharmacy Only Medicines that should be dispensed by a pharmacist.

Chlorpheniramine is an antihistamine used to relieve allergic reactions, such as hay fever, rhinitis, urticaria and asthma. Adverse effects from unsupervised use include drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and constipation. Famotidine is used to treat gastrointestinal ulcers and relieve heartburn and indigestion. Possible adverse effects include diarrhoea and other gastrointestinal disturbances, headache and dizziness.