

Regulator seeks views on reclassification of pain medication

The MHRA is [consulting on making Nuromol](#), a medicine that contains ibuprofen and paracetamol, available without the need to visit a pharmacy.

Dr Sarah Branch, Director of Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines at the MHRA, said:

Every response received will help us gain a better picture of whether people think Nuromol can be made available safely without the need to visit a pharmacy.

We want to hear from as many people as possible, and therefore we urge people to respond to our consultation and let us know their views.

Nuromol is used for the temporary relief of mild to moderate pain associated with migraine, headache, backache, period pain, dental pain, rheumatic and muscular pain, pain of non-serious arthritis, cold and flu symptoms, sore throat, and fever when paracetamol or ibuprofen alone have not provided adequate pain relief. If reclassified it will be available in a pack of 6 tablets.

While most people can take paracetamol, ibuprofen isn't suitable for everyone and it is important that people do not exceed the recommended dose or take more than one paracetamol product at once. We would like to hear from anyone who may be affected by this proposed change in classification .

The MHRA welcomes views from the public and stakeholders on whether this product should become a general sale medicine (available in shops such as supermarkets as well as from pharmacies). At present it is only available for purchase in pharmacies, under the supervision of a pharmacist. The MHRA is committed to making medicines easier to access, where it is safe to do so. Therefore, it is vital that we hear what people have to say on this consultation.

The Commission on Human Medicines advises the government on the safety, quality and effectiveness of medicines and vaccines. They have advised that it is safe for this product to potentially be made available as a general sales product.

The [Nuromol consultation is open until 3 June 2021](#).

Notes to Editor

CMA welcomes Court judgment in Facebook and Giphy case

The Court of Appeal criticised Facebook's conduct, saying the "central problem in this case was entirely of Facebook's own making", and agreeing with the Tribunal's finding that the company "sat on its hands" and "did not properly engage" with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) following its derogation request.

CMA Chief Executive Andrea Coscelli said:

Today's judgment reinforces an important and unequivocal message – initial enforcement orders are key to the CMA's ability to protect UK consumers while carrying out its merger reviews.

Both the Court of Appeal and Competition Appeal Tribunal have now endorsed our approach and our handling of this issue.

Our investigation into Facebook's merger with Giphy is ongoing, and we look forward to working with the companies further as we progress the inquiry.

The CMA is currently investigating the merger of Facebook and Giphy, which completed on 15 May 2020.

On 9 June 2020, the CMA imposed an initial enforcement order (IEO) on both companies, which prevents Facebook and Giphy from further integrating their businesses while the CMA's investigation is ongoing.

Facebook requested a partial lifting of the IEO, formally known as a 'derogation'.

Derogations give a business consent to do certain things that would be otherwise banned under an IEO. The CMA was unable to grant this request because it believed it did not have the necessary information from Facebook to reach a decision.

This led to Facebook applying for a review of the CMA's position at the Competition Appeal Tribunal. In November 2020, the Tribunal dismissed Facebook's appeal in its entirety and the company appealed this decision to the Court of Appeal.

Today's judgment from the Court of Appeal dismissed all of Facebook's grounds of appeal and upheld the decision of the Competition Appeal Tribunal, stressing the importance of merging companies engaging with the CMA when seeking a derogation.

It further confirmed that “Facebook did not properly engage with the CMA. It put in its Carve-Out Requests and then sat on its hands, refusing to answer the CMA’s questions”.

The Court approved of the CMA’s use of initial enforcement orders, which are intended to “hold the ring” while the CMA obtains the information it needs from businesses requesting derogations. The Court noted however, that “this process breaks down if those against whom Initial Enforcement Orders are made refuse to cooperate as happened in this case.”

The Master of the Rolls, Chancellor of the High Court, and Lord Justice Philips unanimously agreed that there was no error in the Tribunal’s reasoning and that Facebook’s challenges to the CMA’s conduct were without merit.

For more information, visit the [Facebook, Inc / Giphy, Inc merger inquiry page](#).

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

Data science apprenticeship

We provide expert advice to government departments in areas including contingent risks, insurance, pensions, and social security.

The field of data science permeates all these areas. Advancing techniques enable us to interrogate and interpret data in more ways than before.

Continuing investment

As part of this investment in this field, GAD is sponsoring several people to undertake apprenticeships in data science. Subjects studied cover a diverse range of topics related to data science:

- technical (such as machine learning)
- practical (such as techniques for data visualisation)
- theoretical (pure maths foundations like calculus and algebra)
- philosophical (considering the ethical risks of data science applications in the real world)

New perspectives

One of the data science apprentices is GAD Analyst Mathew Garvin, who’s undertaking a degree-level apprenticeship course. It uses a combination of distance learning, intensive classroom-based sessions and work-based projects.

Talking about his experience as a data science apprentice, Mathew Garvin said: “I’ve learned new techniques for numerical analysis and programming and insights on other skills such as problem solving and report writing.

“Everything I’ve learned so far, and over the next 2 years of the course, will help me contribute to GAD’s provision of expert actuarial advice to the public sector.

“Overall, it means these extra skills in data science will help me improve the quality of our solutions and provide value for money to the taxpayer.”

Future working

The work of the data science apprentices is core to GAD’s investment in these skills, especially as a way to future proof our ways of working. As with other apprentices, the people studying data science get regular study time.

The learning provides some integration between day-to-day work activities and on-the-job training. The data science apprentices are part of GAD’s overall apprentices programme. The department has apprentices in buildings and facilities management, business development, project management and HR.

OBR projections

The Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) has extensive knowledge of public sector pensions.

Experts in GAD understand the public spending context of these schemes and the detailed technical aspects of liabilities that are just short of £2 trillion.

Analytic capability

We have the analytic capability to process the data on 15 million pension scheme members and quantify the future liabilities.

Our work helps people make effective decisions on affordable benefit levels. It also sets out appropriate allocation of costs between departments, participating employers and between different generations of taxpayers.

Forecasts and priorities

GAD provides varying levels of support to the departments in preparation of their pension scheme cashflow forecasts for the [Office for Budget Responsibility](#) (OBR). These feed into the economic and fiscal outlook published by OBR twice a year, including projecting cash flows on a variety

of assumptions over the forecast period.

Together we discuss OBR's priorities for the cashflow projection exercise. We also explore opportunities to develop and improve GAD's systems for these forecasts to ensure the information OBR receives meets the objectives of the forecast exercise.

McCloud impact

OBR requested support from GAD in February to understand if the schemes could quantify the implications of [the McCloud judgment](#) in their pension cashflow forecasts.

They were appreciative of our insight on how the schemes are likely to be affected and the estimate we provided on the proportion of members who are eligible for the McCloud remedy.

Next steps

GAD has played an instrumental role in the McCloud remedy and has provided costings for all the main public sector pension schemes.

We plan to build on this work to provide estimates for the impact of McCloud on the schemes' cashflows in a consistent manner which will be helpful for the OBR projection work.

[Supporting the government through the pandemic](#)

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