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Press Release



## **Report suspected side effects to help make medicines safer: Malta Medicines Authority launches social media campaign**

The Malta Medicines Authority is running a social media campaign to promote reporting of suspected medicines side effects between 7<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> November, as part of an EU-wide awareness initiative.

At the centre of the campaign is an animation showing the story of a patient who has a suspected adverse reaction. It shows the medicine being prescribed, a suspected side effect being experienced and, finally, how reports are made by patients or healthcare professionals to the medicines regulator.

Medicines regulators rely on the reporting of suspected side effects to help make sure medicines on the market are acceptably safe. Unfortunately, all reporting systems suffer from under reporting, and this is why our campaign is important to both raise awareness and help strengthen the system

Reporting side effects has recently led to:

- the former obesity drug Rimonabant being withdrawn after new evidence which meant the risks were considered to outweigh any benefits
- interaction between Warfarin and cranberry juice – a warning issued that patients taking the medicine should limit or avoid drinking cranberry juice
- in many EU countries the advice not to prescribe Aspirin to children virtually eliminating cases of Reye's syndrome, a serious, and often fatal condition, that causes swelling in the liver and brain, probably preventing thousands of cases since.

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Prof. Anthony Serracino Inglott, Chairperson of the Medicines Authority stated:

“The most important part of our work is making sure the medicines you and your family take are of high quality, safe and effective. Our campaign will help the public; patients and healthcare professionals report potential side effects and have confidence that their reports are making a difference. You can help make medicines safer by reporting any suspected side effects easily and quickly online through [www.medicinesauthority.gov.mt](http://www.medicinesauthority.gov.mt).”

The campaign is part of the Strengthening Collaboration for Operating Pharmacovigilance in Europe (SCOPE) Joint Action project. One of its main aims is to raise awareness of national reporting systems for suspected side effects in medicines.

## Ends

## Notes to Editor

1. National reporting systems for the collection of suspected adverse drug reactions (commonly known as side effects) have acted as early warning systems to help identify numerous important safety issues, many of which were not recognised as being related to a particular medicine until reports were received by medicines regulators.
2. The SCOPE Joint Action project ([scopejointaction.eu](http://scopejointaction.eu)) social media campaign is being taken forward through the Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group for Communications Professionals