

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

27 March 2019

Dear Minister,

Re: Reducing harm from 2,4-Dinitrophenol (DNP)

As you know, health professionals, bereaved parents and MPs continue to voice concerns over the harm being inflicted on the public from DNP poisoning – a highly toxic substance marketed at often vulnerable people to promote extreme weight loss.

We appreciate there are challenges to enforcement, with DNP classed neither as a pharmaceutical product nor considered an illegal drug. We recognise the continued efforts of the National Food Crime Unit and Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit as they seek to make progress within the current legislative and regulatory framework.

Pharmacists, as with other health professionals, will also continue to play their part, including through offering lifestyle advice to the community and helping people with safe ways to maintain a healthy weight.

Despite efforts to raise awareness of the risks of DNP and positive action by some online retailers to restrict sales, there is a national imperative for government to act in the interests of public safety. There have been at least 21 deaths related to DNP since 2013.ⁱ While DNP is associated with high mortality, these figures do not include cases which may have caused serious harm but have not resulted in death. The National Poisons Information Service notes that the numbers of cases of DNP poisoning reported to it has risen, alongside increased access to DNP information by health professionals.ⁱⁱ


DNP is an explosive and poison and, while prosecutions have to date largely focused on food safety, this could offer an additional route for enforcement, potentially via the Poisons Act 1972 and the Control of Poisons and Explosive Precursors Regulations 2015. While DNP has some commercial uses as a chemical, given continued health risks the Government should work with industry to find alternatives.

We would urge the Government to immediately ban DNP to reduce the risk of harm, to commit to prosecuting those seeking to profit from it, and to encourage other countries to do the same.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Ash Soni FRPharmS
President
Royal Pharmaceutical Society



Prof Gino Martini FRPharmS
Chief Scientist
Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Cc: Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Chief Pharmaceutical Officers - England, Scotland and Wales

ⁱ publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2018/08/13/deadly-dnp

ⁱⁱ www.npis.org/dinitrophenol.html

