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Dear Healthcare Professionals,

Warning in relation to 2,4-dinitrophenol (DNP) consumption

Your attention is drawn to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s announcement regarding the warning about the consumption of products containing industrial chemical, 2,4-dinitrophenol (DNP).

DNP is a potentially lethal chemical which has caused severe illness and deaths in multiple countries in the last 2 to 3 years. While DNP is not a licensed drug, it is sold over the Internet as a slimming aid for dieters and body builders in capsules, as a cream, or as a yellow powder or crystals. Typical quantities of DNP contained in capsules are 100 to 250mg.

Toxic dose of DNP is variable. The lowest published lethal dose is 4.3 mg/kg and other doses reported as being lethal range from 2.8 to 5g. The most common side effect associated with the use of DNP is rash, other adverse effects reported include peripheral neuritis particularly affecting the hands, gastroenteritis and anorexia, agranulocytosis and neutropaenia, cataracts, permanent deafness and yellow discolouration of the skin, sclera and urine.

Toxic effects include confusion, agitation, coma, convulsions, hyperthermia, tachycardia, sweating and tachypnoea and cardiovascular collapse. Hyperthermia may be severe and life-threatening, and body temperatures exceeding 40° C have been reported. Changes found at post-mortem include heart muscle damage and acute tubular necrosis.

There is no antidote for the poisoning with DNP and management mainly involves symptomatic and supportive treatment.

If you aware of any adverse events related to DNP, please report the case to the Pharmacovigilance Unit of the DH (tel. no.: 2319 2920, fax: 2319 6319 or email: adr@dh.gov.hk). For details, please refer to the website at Drug Office under "ADR Reporting": <http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/adr.html>. You may wish to visit the Drug Office's website for subscription and browsing of "Drug News" which is a monthly digest of drug safety news and information issued by Drug Office.

Yours sincerely,


(Christine CHEUNG)

for Assistant Director (Drug)

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aspire to be an internationally renowned public health authority*