

**17th WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON THE SELECTION AND USE OF ESSENTIAL
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STATEMENT on NRT by the World Self-Medication Industry Association, WSMI

The World Self-Medication Industry, WSMI, is grateful to the WHO for the opportunity to make a statement in support of the inclusion of Nicotine Replacement Therapy, NRT, onto the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines.

WSMI is a federation of over 50 member associations representing manufacturers and distributors of nonprescription medicines on all continents. Companies in the self-medication industry research, manufacture and distribute nonprescription medicines, designed and labelled for use without medical supervision. Our members include the major manufacturers and distributors of NRT. NRT is, like other nonprescription medicines on the WHO model list, a genericised substance available from a variety of manufacturers, both branded and generic.

NRT has been available in many countries for many years and has been studied intensively for its effectiveness, safety, adverse effects and cost effectiveness. There is strong and consistent evidence that use of NRT increases the success rate in quitting smoking and is highly cost-effective.

Based on the evidence, NRT has in many countries been switched from prescription to nonprescription status, and made available in a variety of presentation forms: chewing gum, patches, inhalers, lozenges and tablets. It is our belief that the complexity of the condition of tobacco addiction, and the variety of factors involved in helping smokers to quit, is significantly assisted by having NRT widely available through all possible channels, prescription as well as nonprescription, and in a variety of forms. The inclusion of NRT on the Model list can only be of help in this respect, encouraging those countries which, for whatever reason, do not have NRT as widely available as needed by smokers.

The Model list presents a list of minimum medicine needs for a basic health care system. Chronic diseases including cancer, chronic respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes are emerging as the primary cause of death and disability around the world, and tobacco use is one of the *main* risk factors causing these diseases. There can be little doubt that helping tobacco users to quit would make a big difference to public health, and by any definition NRT should in our view be on the list of minimum medicine needs for a basic health care system.

David E. Webber Ph.D
Director-General, WSMI