Two separate tech initiatives to help combat codeine misuse have been launched in recent weeks.

The first is an add-on to MedAdvisor’s real-time drug monitoring system, which links pharmacists’ dispensing data to a patient-held app that contains all their medication information.

The second is MedsASSIST, a clinical decision support system developed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia that helps pharmacists identify customers at risk of codeine dependence.

Both were developed on the back of the TGA’s plan to reschedule codeine to a prescription-only medication, which was initially announced in November.

The move is now on hold for a year following backlash from the pharmacy industry — time enough it seems for tech developers to step into the void.

MedAdvisor collaborated with Pain Australia to come up with a push-notification system that warns patients if they are veering into codeine-dangerous waters.

Any patient with the MedAdvisor app — which now includes 115,000 Australians — automatically receives a notification titled ‘taking your medication safely’ when they are dispensed codeine by a MedAdvisor supported pharmacy.

Another alert, ‘dangers of codeine overuse’ is automatically issued to the patient if the app algorithm deems that too much codeine has been dispensed. And if things are getting out of hand, a third message, ‘signs of codeine addiction’, is sent.

“Pharmacists were telling us that they do not like having the conversation with customers about them sliding into [codeine] addiction.

“This allows patients to get information in the privacy of their own homes,” explained MedAdvisor CEO Robert Read.
Lesley Brydon, CEO of Pain Australia, added: “Systems that identify misuse are not new, but systems which involve the patient and provide education are a recent innovation. To be effective, programs targeting serious issues such as codeine addiction must be patient-focused.”

However, the guild’s MedsASSIST monitoring system, which tracks consenting customers’ codeine purchases, uses the direct pharmacy-to-customer discussion approach.

The system, which is being piloted in 150 pharmacies, allows pharmacists to make a clinical judgement on whether to supply OTC codeine.

“If a pharmacist believes a patient’s previous purchase indicates they may not be using it appropriately, this should facilitate a discussion with the patient and possibly their GP if they claim they are taking codeine on the advice of a doctor,” a guild spokesperson told Australian Doctor.

Results on the effectiveness of both systems at preventing codeine misuse will be available in about one year’s time.

This article first appeared in Australian Doctor. Read the original here: http://www.australiandoctor.com.au/News/Latest-News/Tech-Talk-Tackling-codeine-misuse