

Preventing intentional paracetamol overdose in countries with increasing rates and existing sales legislation

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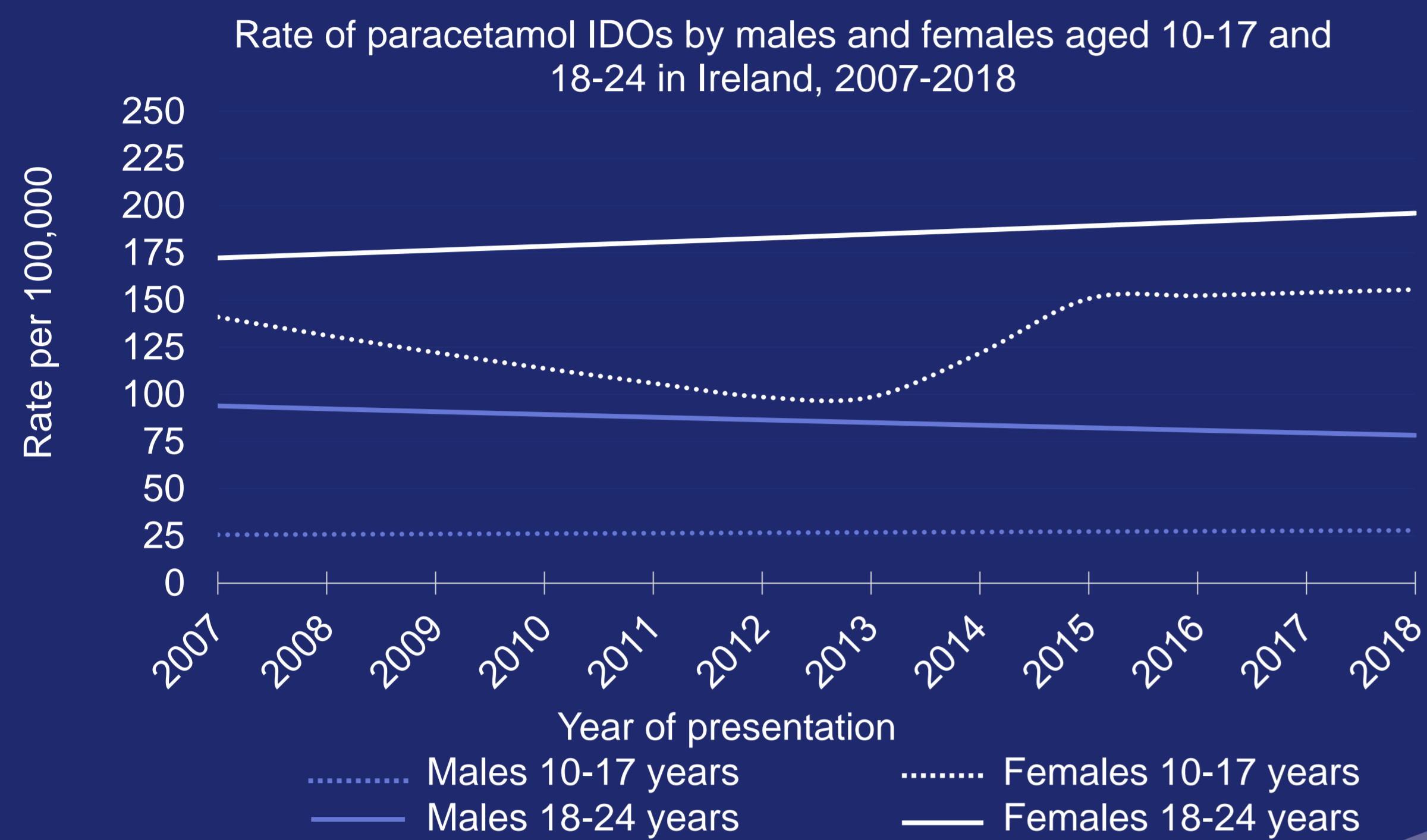
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Introduction

Paracetamol is the drug most frequently used in intentional drug overdose (IDO) in many countries. Its use in IDO is highest among young people (<25 years) and there is evidence of its incidence increasing in countries including Ireland, Sweden, Canada, and Australia. In response a paracetamol Working Group was established in 2021 in Ireland, led by the Department of Health.



Renewed efforts to reduce intentional paracetamol overdose are warranted, which ought to be **evidence-based** and **collaborative** in nature

The aim of this **Working Group** is to collaborate on actions to prevent paracetamol-related IDO by **optimising adherence** to existing legislation which seeks to ensure appropriate access to paracetamol products in pharmacy and retail settings

Legislation in Ireland allows the sale of over-the-counter paracetamol to **maximum pack size of 24 tablets of 500mg in pharmacies and 12 tablets in 500mg in non-pharmacy outlets** (with maximum of one pack per transaction)

Working Group Actions

1. Dissemination of **research evidence** to key stakeholders



2. **Circulation of survey** to pharmacy and retail staff exploring sales legislation understanding

3. **Training and support** offerings for pharmacy and retail staff



4. **Review/optimisation** of training and promotional materials detailing sales legislation (pre-market surveillance)



5. **Market surveillance** (mystery shopper exercises) auditing adherence to sales legislation



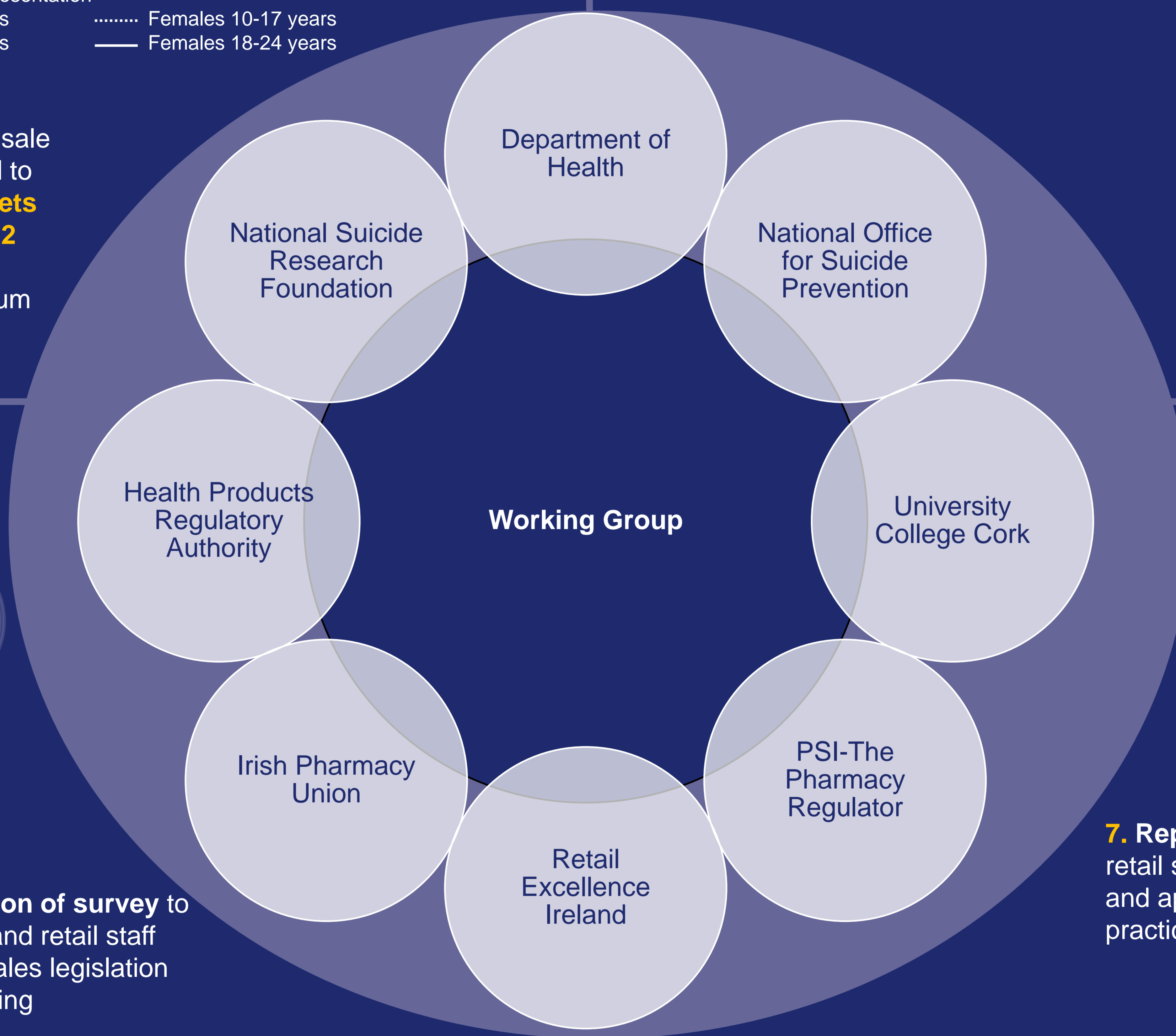
6. **Review/optimisation** of training and promotional materials detailing sales legislation (post-market surveillance)



7. **Repeat survey** to pharmacy and retail staff to explore the knowledge and application of legislation in practice



8. **Dissemination of findings, analyses of paracetamol IDO rates and review of legislation efficacy**



Conclusion

A **multisectoral, collaborative and phased** approach to preventing paracetamol overdose is recommended, **led by government, regulatory and research agencies in alliance with pharmacy and retail bodies**. Efforts to prevent intentional paracetamol overdose require ongoing **evaluation and optimisation** to ensure effectiveness and acceptability.