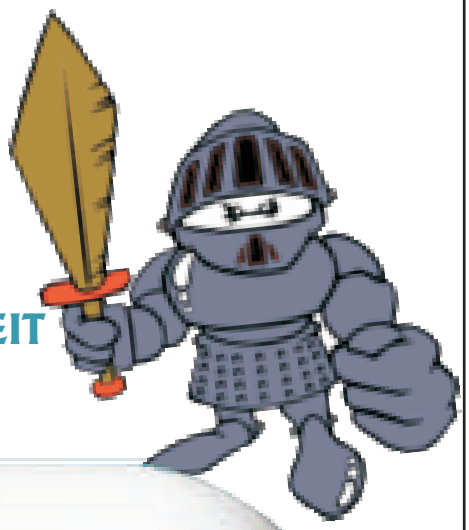
PROTECT HEALTH

COMBAT COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES



PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SEARPharm FORUM AND NATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SOUTH EAST ASIA REGION TO INFORM PHARMACISTS AND THE PUBLIC ON THE DETECTION OF COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES.

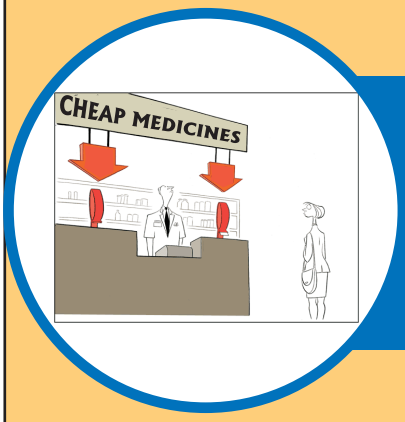
SEARPharm Forum

South East Asian FIP-WHO Forum of Pharmaceutical Associations

TIPS FOR DETECTING COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES FOR PHARMACISTS & PUBLIC

Establish the integrity of the source prior to need. Where possible, establish state-licensed pharmacies or approved supplier. This way, you know your medicine is coming from a reputable source, and you can get help if you have any problems with your medicine.

Know your medicine. Any time you get a prescription refilled, check the color, texture, taste and shape of the medicine. Anything different? Talk to your supplier.



If a product is being offered at an unusually cheap price, treat with extra caution.

Look for signs of a removed or switched product label. One common practice by counterfeiters is to remove the original label and replace it with a counterfeit label. To do this, they use lighter fluid, acetone or some other solvent which may leave a tacky residue on the container. Also the label may be faded or discoloured along the edges due to the solvent.

Look for an altered expiry date. Counterfeiters commonly purchase 'short-dated' products and then alter the labels.

Look for subtle changes in the products package (compare with previously purchased products), not withstanding legitimate parallel imported products. Examine the package for differences in paper texture, size and thickness of the labels, also the gloss or finish on the paper. Look for differences in fonts and font sizes, print colour or raised print. Examine all printing on flaps and surfaces of the box in comparison with previously purchased products where possible. Look for overt security features such as holograms or colour shifting inks. Finally, look for breaks or tears in the sealing tape and seals.

Look for variations in the size of the container (compare with previously purchased products), not withstanding legitimate parallel imported products. Look for differences in container length, diameters and shapes. Examine for variations in diameters of bottle openings or lids. Examine for variations in the thickness of glass or plastic containers and for variations in container colour tints.

Listen to patients. The majority of counterfeit medicines are first detected by patients

Compare the physical characteristics of the product. Look at colour, tablet or capsule markings, shape and thickness of the medicine. You can also weigh the product to see if there are wide variations.

WHO defines a counterfeit medicine as: counterfeit medicine is one which is deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source. Counterfeiting can apply to both branded and generic products and counterfeit products may include products with the correct ingredients or with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients, with insufficient active ingredients or with fake packaging.

If you find, any person selling counterfeit drugs , please report to your area state drug authority immediately.

If you find a website you think is illegally selling human drugs, animal drugs, medical devices, biological products, foods, dietary supplements or cosmetics over the Web,
please report at WHO website:
http://www.who.int/medicines/organization/qsm/activities/qualityassuarance/cft/CounterfeitReporting.htm

There are several advanced packaging technology that may prove helpful in combating this problem like

1) Holograms
2) Pilfer-proof packing
3) Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)
4) Electro-magnetic identification (EMID)
5) Acousto magnetic identification (AMID)
6) Bar code
7) Pharma code
8) Security label
9) Pedigree system of labeling
10) Verification Systems

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