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FDA ADVISORY
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SUBJECT: Consumer Tips on Buying Medicines from Drug Outlets

Counterfeit medicines have harmful effects on the health, and in worst case scenario counterfeit medicines can kill patients. They erode public confidence in the health care system and health professionals as well as the pharmaceutical industry, the suppliers, and outlets of medicines. They stifle research and development of pharmaceutical companies in discovering new and innovative drugs to combat emerging communicable and non-communicable diseases. They have economic impact on legitimate manufacturers and distributors of original medicines. Drug innovators' reputations and financial standing which took years to build are simply eroded.

Under Republic Act No. 8203, otherwise known as the Special Law on Counterfeit Drugs, the following medicines may be considered as counterfeit: a) medicinal products with correct ingredients but not in the correct amount as provided thereunder; b) wrong ingredients, without active ingredients, or with insufficient quantity of active ingredients, which results in the reduction of the drug's safety, efficacy, quality, strength or purity; c) drug which is deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source or with fake packaging, and can apply to both branded and generic products.

Counterfeit drug/medicine also refers to: a) the drug itself, or the container or labeling thereof or any part of such drug, container, or labeling bearing without authorization the trademark, trade name or other identification mark or imprint or any likeness to that which is owned or registered in the Bureau of Patent, Trademark, and Technology Transfer (BPTTT) in the name of another natural or juridical person; b) a drug product refilled in containers by unauthorized persons if the legitimate labels or marks are used; c) an unregistered imported drug product, except drugs brought in the country for personal use as confirmed and justified by accompanying medical records; and d) a drug which contains no amount of or a different active ingredient, or less than 80% of the active ingredient it purports to possess, as distinguished from an adulterated drug including reduction or loss of efficacy due to expiration.

The following are some tips for consumers and patients when buying their medicines:

1. It is important to remember that fast moving or frequently bought medicines as well as expensive drugs are the targets of counterfeiters.
2. Buy only from legitimate drug outlets. Make sure to buy only from FDA-registered drug outlets. All FDA-registered drug outlets should have a pharmacist present to





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supervise the business operation of the drug outlets. Do not buy from drug outlets without any pharmacist.

3. Ask, if not question, the pharmacist when in doubt on the quality of the medicines being dispensed. You may ask the pharmacist if the drug outlet buys its stocks from legitimate distributors or suppliers/wholesalers. Ask for the FDA Certificate of Product Registration or the official receipt issued by the FDA-licensed distributors or suppliers/wholesalers.
4. Look at the product being handed over carefully. Counterfeit medicines look similar to the original medicines, but there are differences in the quality of the label, e.g. the quality of the print and color, font size or the logo. If you have used the drug before and noticed any difference in appearance of the packaging or the drug, you may report it to the FDA via email at report@fda.gov.ph.
5. If you feel the drug you are taking is not working or there are adverse effects, call your doctor, pharmacist and even the drug manufacturer. Inform the FDA via email report@fda.gov.ph.
6. Always demand for the official receipts as evidence of where and when you bought the medicines.
7. Be careful when buying medicines online. Avoid buying drugs from online pharmacies that are not licensed. So far, the FDA has yet to issue any license to on-line pharmacy, but there is already one that has applied for a License to Operate.

For inquiries and more information, kindly email us at info@fda.gov.ph.


KENNETH Y. HARTIGAN-GO, MD
Acting Director-General

