



MEDIA RELEASE

Health professionals unite in WHPA Prague Call to Action, urging governments to ramp up fight against falsified medicines

JOINT INITIATIVE BY THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN HEALTH PROFESSIONS AND WHPA¹

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In a first for the Central European region, national health professions organisations have discussed and endorsed the [WHPA Prague Call to Action](#), to reduce the harmful impact of falsified medical products on patients and the public. With the WHPA Prague Call to Action, health professions leaders are gearing up their response to this serious threat to patient safety and they are calling on governments in the region to do the same.

Under the banner of the [“Be Aware, Take Action” campaign against counterfeit medical products](#), the workshop, held on 21 November in Prague, tackled the grave problem of falsified medical products worldwide. The workshop recognised that falsified medical products are, above all, a threat to patient safety with grave consequences in terms of increased disease burden, mortality and costs for healthcare systems. Health professions are extremely concerned about the current absence of harmonized international legislation, and non-deterrent sanctions on falsification of medical products that are not proportionate to the harm caused to patients.

Participants discussed the following four key strategies for the basis of a comprehensive regional action plan against falsified medical products:

- Increasing capacity of our healthcare professionals to educate the public,
- Fostering regional cooperation initiatives,
- Strengthening collaborative practice when managing patients,
- Improving collaboration with health and enforcement authorities plus other key stakeholders.

The WHPA workshop kicked off with a Roundtable on combating falsified medicines in Europe that focused on recent progress and key activities in Europe to better protect European citizens from the serious threats posed by falsified medicines.

John Chave, Secretary-General, Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) moderated this roundtable, stating, “The risk of falsified medicines entering the legal medicines supply chain is rising. Let’s take action now, so we never have to get to the point where we lose confidence in the medicines in our local pharmacy.” He continued that this is the reason PGEU supports the new European Directive on Falsified Medicines.

WHPA workshop presenters included:

Domenico Di Giorgio, Council of Europe, who spoke on “MEDICRIME: What are the new opportunities for health professional associations to work with Parties of the convention?” Mr Di Giorgio said, “The only way to stop this criminal activity is to have people from different professions around the table to find solutions, as we

¹ World Health Professions Alliance <http://www.whpa.org>

have done today. Now we have to focus on communicating with patients and the general public about the dangers of falsified medicines, and the dangers of buying medicines from the internet. Health professions are best placed to do this;”

Olexandr Polishchuk, WHO EURO, who presented the WHO strategy on combating counterfeit medicines in Europe, added, “We can’t tell by looking at a package as to whether medicines are safe or not. Medicines do not have borders – they can arrive at the post office, via illegal channels and across borders. When we all speak using the same language (norms and standards) to combat counterfeiting, we will be making progress.”

Jim Thomson, Chair, European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines EAASM, which campaigns so that the legitimate supply chain is better secured said, “Falsified medical products are completely wrong. They totally undermine the relation between doctors, other health professionals, and their patients. How can a health professional treat a patient if the medicine or the information about it is fake?” One goal of EAASM is to direct people unaware of the high proportion of counterfeit medical products on the internet back to legal sites and high street pharmacies, and then back into the legitimate supply chain.

Robert Bruchet, EFPIA/Pfizer, presented perspectives from the pharmaceutical industry. He indicated, “We are taking responsibility for implementation of the EU Directive, especially to secure all existing entry and exit points in partnership with other stakeholders, including health professionals, involved in the European supply chain.”

Xuanhao Chan, representing the World Health Professions Alliance stressed the importance of vigilance when it comes to falsified medical products. “Failure to act to prevent falsification of essential medicines would be a fundamental breach of the trust patients place in public health structures.”

Co-hosted with WHPA and the Czech Pharmacy Chamber the workshop brought together more than 40 participants from Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, including leaders representing national associations of nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and physicians, representatives from WHO regional office in Europe, Council of Europe, Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union, and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations. The workshop also saw the participation of pharmacy, medical, dentistry, and nursing student representatives and patient groups from the region.

About WHPA www.whpa.org

The World Health Professions Alliance WHPA is a unique alliance of The International Council of Nurses (ICN) www.icn.ch, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) www.fip.org, the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) www.wcpt.org, the FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) www.fdiworldental.org and the World Medical Association (WMA) www.wma.net.

WHPA addresses global health issues striving to help deliver cost effective, quality health care worldwide. Together, the partners of the WHPA include more than 600 national member organizations, making WHPA the key point of global access to health care professionals within the five disciplines.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of national nurses associations, representing the more than 13 million nurses working worldwide. www.icn.ch

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) is the global federation of national organisations of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists representing more than two million pharmacists around the world. www.fip.org

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), the global voice for physical therapists / physiotherapists, has 101 national member organisations representing over 350,000 members of the profession. www.wcpt.org

The FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) is a federation of approximately 200 national dental associations and specialist groups representing more than one million dentists worldwide. www.fdiworldental.org

The World Medical Association (WMA) is the global federation of national medical associations from around the world, directly and indirectly representing the views of more than nine million physicians. www.wma.net

For more information about Be Aware, Take Action, see www.whpa.org/counterfeit_campaign.htm or send an email to whpa.campaign@wma.net