



MEDIA RELEASE

Call to Action: Fight the dangers of medical counterfeits

JOINT INITIATIVE BY THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN, COLOMBIA AND MEXICO

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Representatives of the health professions (dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and physical therapy) and patient organizations from nine countries have joined together in a 'Call to Action', to combat the threat to public health and patient safety posed by counterfeit and falsified medical products.

Twenty-three national health professional organisations who are members of the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) partners – International Council of Nurses (ICN), the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), the World Dental Federation (FDI) and the World Medical Association (WMA) – agreed upon and signed the **WHPA San José Call to Action on Counterfeit Medical Products** when they met at the first-ever multi-professional workshop on counterfeit medical products on 19 October, in Costa Rica's capital city of San José.

The workshop concluded that counterfeit medical products are, above all, a public health problem and a threat to patient safety with grave consequences in terms of increased disease burden, mortality and costs for healthcare systems. Furthermore, it was recognised that patients have the power to decide where to buy and how to use medical products, but they are also the most fragile link in the chain and the main victim of counterfeit medical products. It is therefore crucial to inform and raise the awareness of patients about the risks of counterfeit medical products and encourage them to take action to fight this problem.

Under the banner of the "Be Aware, Take Action" campaign against counterfeit medical products, this was the first of a series of WHPA workshops, aiming to tackle the serious challenge of counterfeit medical products worldwide. Co-hosted with WHPA by the Pharmaceutical Society of Costa Rica and the Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas, the workshop brought together participants from Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.

David Benton, Chief Executive Officer, International Council of Nurses, speaking on behalf of the World Health Professions Alliance, stressed the importance of vigilance when it comes to falsified and counterfeit medical products. "As concerned physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, physical

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therapists and patient representatives, we are speaking out – because we are very worried about the dangers that counterfeit and falsified medical products pose to patient safety. Now is the time to act.”

Workshop participants agreed upon and signed the **WHPA San José Call to Action on Counterfeit Medical Products**, addressed to patients, healthcare professionals and their organisations and health authorities and urging these stakeholders to *Be Aware and Take Action*, as the WHPA campaign proposes.

The workshop targeted joint strategies amongst the five health professions to identify report and purge counterfeit medical products from the supply chain, and to empower patients to make the best decisions when it comes to acquiring, carefully checking and using medical products. Presenters included the Pan-American Health Organization, the US Food and Drug Administration Office for Latin America and the FIP Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas. These provided a clear picture of the severity and complexity of the problem, as well as the efforts being made by these organisations to fight it and the legal framework available in each country to define, combat and penalise the production and distribution of counterfeit medical products.

There was consensus on the need to raise awareness about this issue amongst healthcare professionals and the public in general, through massive campaigns and training initiatives. Likewise, participants unanimously agreed on the need for strong and clear laws and institutions that prevent, pursue and punish such crimes – laws that are written in collaboration with healthcare professionals’ organisations and are based on their technical input.

About WHPA www.whpa.org

The World Health Professionals 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, please see www.whpa.org/counterfeit_campaign.htm or send an email to whpa.campaign@wma.net