



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Abuja Call to Action: Fight the dangers of counterfeit medicines**

JOINT INITIATIVE BY THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS FROM AFRICA

*Abuja, Nigeria / Geneva, Switzerland, 23 November 2010*

In a first for the African continent, thirty national health professions organisations (dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and physical therapy) and four patient organisations have discussed and endorsed the **WHPA Abuja Call to Action on Counterfeit Medical Products** when they met at the first-ever multi-professional workshop on counterfeit medical products in Africa, held 22-23 November, in Abuja, Nigeria.

Under the banner of the [“Be Aware, Take Action” campaign against counterfeit medical products](#), this [World Health Professions Association](#) WHPA workshop aimed to tackle the serious challenge of counterfeit medical products worldwide. Co-hosted with WHPA by the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria and the FIP African Pharmaceutical Forum, the workshop brought together 92 participants from Cameroon, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. In attendance were also patient advocates from the Liberian United Youth for Community Safety and Development, Association of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, Women and Children Alive, Community Health and Information Network.

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.

Keynote speaker, Mr Hashim Yusufu, Director of the Nigeria Federal Taskforce for combating counterfeit medicines and Chairman of the Africa regional task force on the prevention and control of counterfeit medical products, was adamant that the fight against counterfeit medicines can only be won with close collaboration among health professionals, civil society, regulators, police, customs and manufacturers. He also gave an update of the recent anti-counterfeiting initiatives taken in Africa and globally. In Nigeria, NAFDAC is pushing for more deterrent legislations to be enforced against counterfeiters.

The workshop recognised 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 noted 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. This important event also sent a strong message urging all governments to implement and enforce relevant legislations and regulations that will prevent, control and reduce the incidence of counterfeit medicines.

#### **The World Health Profession Alliance WHPA**

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Prof. Kofo Savage, 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 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.”

Other presenters included the Mr Ben Botwe from the West African Health Organization; ECOWAS; Senator Eme Ufot Ekaette, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria; Dr. Baamong Nicholas, President of Nigeria Medical Association; Pharm. Azubike Okwor, President of Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria; and Mr Xuanhao Chan, International Pharmaceutical Federation, also representing WHPA.

They provided a clear picture of the severity and complexity of the problem, as well as the efforts being made by their organisations to fight it and the legal framework available in the region to define, combat and penalise the production and distribution of counterfeit medical products.

There was agreement on the need to raise awareness about this issue amongst healthcare professionals and the public in general, through campaigns and training initiatives. Likewise, participants 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.

In closing, Her Honourable Minister, Prof Dora Akunyili, emphasized that, “As leaders representing nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and physicians, we must commit to accelerate our response to this problem by establishing inter professional collaboration so that health professionals and patient support groups can begin to tap from each other’s core competencies in fighting this public health threat, among other key actions. This will be a long fight and I am with you all the way.”

#### **About WHPA** [www.whpa.org](http://www.whpa.org)

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

For more information about Be Aware, Take Action, please see [www.whpa.org/counterfeit\\_campaign.htm](http://www.whpa.org/counterfeit_campaign.htm) or send an email to [whpa.campaign@wma.net](mailto:whpa.campaign@wma.net)