

WHPA Taipei Call to Action

We, national member organizations¹ of the 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) are meeting in Taipei on the 30th June 2011, to address the alarming public health threat of falsified and counterfeit² medical products in our region.

We **recognize** that in some countries, the infiltration and sale of counterfeit and falsified medicines in the legitimate supply chain can cause disease, disability and death to patients and healthy individuals around the world. Failure to act to prevent this would be a fundamental breach of the trust patients place in public health structures.

We **observe** that unscrupulous vendors are deliberately preying upon vulnerable groups such as the elderly, poor and less well educated, thereafter misleading them into buying counterfeit medical products.

We **note with grave concern** that the people of our countries are at risk of dying from medicines that may have been accidentally adulterated, produced to a poor standard and/or degraded by inappropriate storage. Such problems should not be ignored. But neither should they be confused with deliberate counterfeiting.

We **fear** that in countries with a high burden of communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, counterfeit and falsified medical products have already led to drug-resistant forms of infective pathogens which are reversing gains that have been achieved in fighting these diseases.

We **strongly affirm** to governments and the international community that health professionals are uniquely positioned in this fight and will rise up to the challenge to increase the awareness of this problem and implement definitive strategies towards curbing it.

We also **acknowledge** the work done by the World Health Organization, IMPACT³ and the World Health Professions Alliance in combating against counterfeit medical products.

Therefore,

Today, as leaders representing nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and physicians, we jointly agree on the following 4 key strategies for the basis of a comprehensive regional action plan against counterfeiting of medical products:

1. Increase capacity of healthcare professionals

¹ Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan

² A 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.

³ International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Taskforce <http://www.who.int/impact>

2. Foster regional cooperation initiatives
3. Strengthen collaborative practice
4. Improve collaboration with health and enforcement authorities plus other key stakeholders

Increase capacity of healthcare professionals to educate public

Many patients and healthy individuals seek advice on use of medical products from nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists or physicians. It then becomes paramount that healthcare professionals are adequately trained to be knowledgeable about risk of buying counterfeit and falsified medicines from unknown sources and how to better communicate those risks to patients and the public.

Thus, *where appropriate*, national healthcare professional associations should collaborate with educational institutions of healthcare professionals and the pharmaceutical sector to undertake the following actions:

- Raise awareness of the threat of counterfeit medical products amongst health professionals
- Include the subject of counterfeit medical products in undergraduate healthcare professional curriculum and pre-service training.
- Work with medicines manufacturers, national quality control laboratories, hospitals and universities to learn about quality products and ways of detecting counterfeits.
- Provide continuing education programmes to healthcare professionals and community-based health workers on the detection and reporting of counterfeit medical products
- Develop and implement tools⁴ for patient counselling and public awareness.
- Conduct regular public campaigns educating patients and the public about how they can protect themselves from the dangers of counterfeit and falsified medical products

Regional cooperation initiatives

There is a need to be cognizant of the current situation in which counterfeit and falsified medical products continue to move in international commerce including through the Internet, representing a major threat to public health, especially in the poorer areas of developing countries where regulatory and law enforcement capacities are weak. Now more so than ever, there is a need to work together with the other organizations of healthcare professionals in each country and across the region in order to optimize resources and maximize the effectiveness of our efforts.

Thus, *where appropriate*, national healthcare professional associations should collaborate with relevant regional stakeholders to undertake the following actions:

- Establish national and regional alliances of healthcare professional associations including patient/consumer groups and other relevant partners to promote inter-sectoral coordination for better information exchange and sharing of best practices.

⁴ WHPA "BE AWARE, TAKE ACTION" Toolkit. Available from http://www.whpa.org/counterfeit_campaign.htm

- Work together with regional entities such as the WHO regional offices in Western Pacific and South-East Asia, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) community and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Collaborative practice

There is a need to understand and acknowledge the fact that escalating complexity of care demands a multidisciplinary approach. Healthcare professionals must be vigilant and to work together when managing unusual responses to medical treatment. They need to have heightened vigilance in geographical areas where counterfeit and falsified medical products are prevalent.

Thus, *where appropriate*, national healthcare professional associations should undertake the following actions:

- Work together across various disciplines to raise awareness of and actions against falsified and counterfeit medical products amongst patients, the general public, their colleagues and government leaders including health authorities.
- Encourage their members to take an active role in identifying, reporting and eliminating counterfeit and falsified medical products from the legitimate supply/distribution chain.

Collaboration with relevant authorities

Healthcare professionals and their associations need to support national drug regulatory authorities and relevant government agencies to aid pharmaceutical guideline enforcement.

Thus, *where appropriate*, national healthcare professional associations should collaborate with relevant authorities to undertake the following actions:

- Work towards implementation of harmonized guidelines on the regulatory control, export, import and transit conditions of pharmaceutical products.
- Develop standards of practice for entities involved in international, regional and national trade in biopharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical starting materials.
- Establish national reporting systems that enable health professionals to report and to get feedback about adverse events, drug-related problems, medication errors, misuse or drug abuse, defects in product quality or detection of counterfeit and falsified medical products.

The Participants of this WHPA regional workshop agree unanimously on the WHPA TAIPEI “CALL TO ACTION” and plan in cooperation to support it.