



Counterfeit medicines

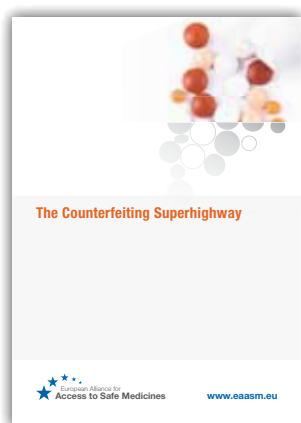
**A clear and present danger
to public health**

EAASM milestone reports



European Patient Safety and Parallel Pharmaceutical Trade – a potential public health disaster....

Dr Jonathan Harper identifies the systemic fault-lines within the EU supply system and warns of the imminent risk of counterfeit penetration of the system. In 2008, he is proved right as tens of thousands of fake packs flood into the UK.



The Counterfeiting Superhighway

EAASM investigations reveal 62% of medicines bought from the internet, to be counterfeit or substandard. “Medicines” supplied to the “patients” (without prescription or medical consultation) include powerful anti-psychotics, medicines with serious side-effects during pregnancy, and prohibited substances.



Packaging Patient Protection

EAASM report details the key elements required to introduce effective anti-counterfeiting legislation in the EU. The report is welcomed by MEPs and 5 of 7 of its recommendations are included in legislative proposals.

All 3 EAASM milestone reports are available at: www.eaasm.eu

Counterfeit medicine – a clear and present danger

- ★ The most recent data from the European Commission shows that 34 million fake medicines were found by European customs authorities in just 8 weeks during 2008.¹ This demonstrates the explosion in counterfeiting when compared to the 2.7 million fake medicines seized during 2006.²
- ★ International criminal gangs and terrorist organisations are increasingly involved in medicines counterfeiting. This is because the profit margins are often much higher than those for illegal drugs and the prison sentences much lower.³
- ★ Counterfeiters often produce pills that look genuine, even to pharmaceutical security experts, but they can be made in unhygienic conditions and often contain little or no active ingredient. Cheap and sometimes toxic ingredients are used to achieve the right visual effect – for example, floor polish to achieve a gloss finish. These pills seriously damage health by failing to provide the life-saving effect of a genuine medicine.⁴
- ★ Ground-breaking EAASM research shows 62% of prescription only medicines purchased on the internet to be counterfeit or substandard.⁴
- ★ Fake prescription medicines have been unknowingly dispensed by high street pharmacies to patients with life threatening conditions. Most recently Zyprexa[®]

(schizophrenia), Plavix[®] (for people recovering from heart attacks), Casodex[®] (prostate cancer) and Novofine Needles (insulin pens) reached European patients through the legitimate supply chain.^{5,6}

EAASM – actions louder than words

- ★ The EAASM campaigns for action to ensure that the legitimate supply chain is better secured. Fake medicines reaching patients directly threaten those patients, undermine health services and threaten patient confidence in physicians, pharmacists and medicines.
 - The EAASM supports supply chain security measures put forward by the European Commission's pharmaceutical package which was recently approved by the ENVI committee 51 votes to zero.⁷ It also supports the efforts of National regulators and professional bodies.
- ★ To date, three EAASM^{4,8,9} reports show that counterfeit and substandard medicines represent a clear and present danger to European patients.
- ★ It is important that Europe creates a legal environment which targets counterfeiters and deters counterfeiting. Increased policing and greater penalties for those found guilty of counterfeiting medicines should be introduced to protect public health.

References

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The EAASM

Overview

The European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines is a pan-European, patient safety initiative, campaigning to rid the supply chain of counterfeit and substandard medicines. An inclusive, cross-sector not-for-profit patient organisation, it engages all relevant stakeholders to promote access to safe medicines.

Objectives

- ★ Raise public awareness of the dangers of counterfeit and substandard medicines
- ★ Create a call for action for improved legislation, enforcement and patients' rights for safe medicines
- ★ Input into existing anti-counterfeiting initiatives where appropriate
- ★ Contribute to European health literacy

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EAASM member list:

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| Ahura Scientific | European Men's Health Forum | Motor Neurone Disease Association |
| Amgen | European Parkinson's Disease Association (EPDA) | NanoGuardian |
| Bayer Healthcare | European Sexual Dysfunction Alliance | National Tremor Foundation |
| Boehringer Ingelheim | Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy | New Era Alliance |
| Eli Lilly | Healthcare Compliance Packaging Council | Pfizer |
| European Association for research on alternating hemiplegia | International Bureau for Epilepsy | Primary Care Cardiovascular Society |
| European Coalition for Positive People | | Society for Fighting Pain |
| European Depression Association | | Stroke Alliance for Europe (SAFE) |
| European Dystonia Alliance | | Thalassaemia International Federation |
| | | The Centre for Mental Health |