

January 2010

# Newsletter

Greetings! And a very happy New Year from (and to), all of us concerned with patient safety and safe medicines; 2010 promises to be a very interesting year.

There is bound to be progress in Brussels, and the preservation and strengthening (where possible) of the anti-counterfeiting elements of the pharma package will be front and centre in our efforts this year.

Of course, much of the responsibility for implementation will fall to national regulators and we will be encouraging individual Member States to follow the MHRA's example.

The final quarter of 2009 was extremely busy and, following our presentation to the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists shortly before the vote, culminated in the so-called 're-importation' amendment being voted down in the US Senate. One can only imagine what the effect on Europe's medicines supply would have been had that not happened. One thing's for sure: it would have placed patients on both sides of the Atlantic at tremendous risk.

We achieved much in 2009 but there is no way we will rest on our laurels. For all of us at the EAASM, the turn of the year is little more than a calendar page turning because, and we can be certain of this, the counterfeiter didn't take time off to celebrate the New Year.

## EAASM to campaign for legislation on internet pharmacy during 2010

Following agreement at December's Annual General Meeting, internet pharmacy will top the EAASM list of priorities for 2010. In 2008, our own research revealed that 62% of prescription medicines purchased online are fake, counterfeit or substandard.

We have worked hard since then to increase public awareness about this issue – reaching more than 21 million Europeans with the worrying headline statistic above. However, a quick internet search will reveal that the number of apparently suspect internet pharmacies is increasing steadily, suggesting further action is needed.

In the coming year, we hope to create a campaign that will once again focus public, political and internet service provider attention on the internet pharmacy issue. Our ultimate goal is to encourage action that will either warn or protect patients about the risks of buying prescription medicines from illegal internet pharmacies.

Our *Counterfeiting Superhighway* report contains more information on the dangers of internet pharmacies.

## Pharmaceutical Package update

The new European Parliament Rapporteur for the counterfeit medicines element of the Pharmaceutical Package, Marisa Matias, has now published her report on the European Commission's legislative proposals. The EAASM is greatly encouraged by many of the amendments made in this document, including:

- ★ Member States should increase the legal penalties for fake medicines to the same level as those for narcotics
- ★ Every actor in the legal supply chain is responsible for checking product authenticity of medicinal products in their possession
- ★ Repackagers will have to replace original security features with 'equivalents,' to ensure pack security is maintained
- ★ Liability for both the quality and authenticity of a product rests with the repackager/supply chain actor

These measures largely align with those set out in the [EAASM report – Packaging Patient Protection](#).

We delivered this report to every MEP in Brussels last month and its impact will be all the greater following the Rapporteur's latest publication. We will now push for swift action on the recommendations.

## MHRA publishes second consultation

This month the UK's MHRA released its public consultation document: *Measures to strengthen the medicines supply chain and reduce the risk from counterfeit medicines*.

This document recognises that the current UK regulatory regime no longer provides the level of protection that the public expects.

We strongly support the action taken by the MHRA and particularly the introduction of a 'specific offence of dealing with/trading in/ brokering sales of counterfeit medicines' with a '**maximum available penalty of 10-12 years**' imprisonment for the most serious offences'. This clearly provides a more substantial deterrent to counterfeiters than the current 2-year penalty.

The MHRA is often viewed as a leader across Europe, so the conclusions it reaches will hopefully have far-reaching influence. We will therefore be submitting our views during the course of consultation, **and would urge our member organisations to do the same**.

## Miami Conference

February sees Miami hosting the 5th Global Forum on Pharmaceutical Anti-Counterfeiting, the leading global anti-counterfeiting event in the calendar. Jim Thomson, EAASM Chair, will give the opening presentation at the Forum, looking in detail at the downstream effects and costs of fake medicines. These are often hidden and Jim is working with EAASM Board Member, Dr Ian Banks of the European Men's Health Forum, to expose the true healthcare costs of counterfeits.

In addition, Jim is co-hosting (with Professor Marv Shepherd of the University of Texas at Austin and the Partnership for Safe Medicines) a workshop focusing on the European supply system (legitimate and illegitimate) and its implications for US patients.

## EAASM joins twitter

In a continued effort to improve communications with existing members, boost appeal to non-members and raise the profile of the EAASM, we have joined the micro-blogging service twitter ([@EAASM](#)) and will regularly update followers with relevant news, articles and speaking engagements. We urge all of you who 'tweet' to follow the EAASM for the latest developments.

To support and maximise the effect of this, we are in the process of upgrading the website ([www.eaasm.eu](#)) with links to 'follow us on twitter' plus a section on the homepage where our most recent tweets can be viewed.

## News updates

The EAASM's website ([www.eaasm.eu/Media\\_Centre/News/January\\_2010](#)) continues to be a one-stop shop for counterfeit medicines news from around the world. This month, we report the horrifying statistic that 5,000 illegal online pharmacies have now been identified.



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