



Wednesday 25th November 2009

Recent Illegal Medicines Seizures highlight the need for patients to access medicines through the legitimate supply chain

Following news of successful seizures of illegal medicines by the DHSSPS Medicines Inspectorate, Ms Ann Bowen, President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, reminded patients and carers in Northern Ireland to remain vigilant to the great dangers inherent in using any counterfeit medicines and to only access medicines through legitimate regulated sources which ensure quality, safety, and accountability.

“Counterfeit medicines, which could be potentially fatal to the patient, are a serious concern to all of us who work to ensure the safe supply and delivery of pharmaceutical care. I therefore applaud this recent seizure by Dr. Mawhinney’s team at the DHSSPS.

“Whilst the various regulatory authorities work together to protect the legitimate supply chain of medicines from counterfeit products, what these recent seizures in Northern Ireland show is that there are clear dangers in obtaining medicines from unregulated sources, such as illegal internet sites.

“I must reinforce to the public in the strongest terms the importance of their obtaining medicines through accredited and legal channels, and preferably through proper consultation with their GP and local pharmacist.

ENDS

For further information please contact Mark Neale, Head of Public Affairs at the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, on 028 90 326 927 or 07854 004 884 mark.neale@psni.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland is the regulatory and professional body for pharmacy in Northern Ireland. Its principal objective is the protection of patient safety in the provision of pharmacy services in Northern Ireland. It also seeks to develop the pharmacy profession in the public interest.
2. Ms Ann Bowen (or another spokesperson from the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland) will be available for interview throughout Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th November. Contact should be made with Mark Neale in the first instance on 02890 326 927 or 07854 004 884 to arrange this.
3. Ms Bowen's call to the public comes after it was revealed that significant seizures had been made by the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)(NI) Medicines Inspectorate as part of the International Operation "Pangea II" against counterfeit medicines suppliers. Included within the haul were human growth hormones and drugs for erectile dysfunction and 130,000 benzylpiperazine tablets, a recreational drug which affects the body in a way similar to amphetamines. Operation Pangea II is co-ordinated by Interpol and involves 24 countries, plus the World Health Organization, together with police and customs.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8375144.stm

<http://u.tv/News/Warning-over-dangers-of-online-medicines/8b280b76-466a-47d7-96e1-2a230707c1df>

4. Members of the public who wish to report a suspected counterfeit medicine can contact the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) dedicated 24 hour hotline on 0207 084 2701, or write to: Counterfeits, The Intelligence Unit, MHRA, Market Towers, 1 Nine Elms Lane, London, SW8 5NQ. More information on counterfeit medicines is also available from the MHRA website:

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Generalsafetyinformationandadvice/Adviceandinformationforconsumers/Counterfeitmedicinesanddevices/index.htm>