

PHARMACISTS COMMIT TO KEEPING MEDICINES SAFE FOR PATIENTS

A paradox exists worldwide: much is invested into discovering and approving medicines that benefit our health, but not enough is invested into controlling the distribution systems of these same medicines.

Being aware of their responsibilities as drug and health professionals, the members of the International Conference of Francophone Pharmacists Associations (CIOPF) are worried about the worldwide development of counterfeit medicines or those with dubious origins,

- either within the legal drug distribution network,
- or via illegal distribution circuits (drug street peddling, illegal sales through the internet, etc.)

At the same time, the fact that medicinal products have become commonplace in the eye of the public is an additional risk factor for public health. Medicinal products must not be treated as ordinary commercial products; they are dangerous.

In accordance with their efforts to ensure patient safety regarding medicines, the members of the International Conference of Francophone Pharmacists Associations (CIOPF) recommend that all players be vigilant and assume responsibility, adhering to the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) recommendations on counterfeit medicines¹

The CIOPF members advise pharmacists:

- to call for a specific chain of medicine safety by way of marking batches and using technologies which ensure traceability from the manufacturer to community and hospital pharmacies. This should include both the tracking of the medicinal products and the intermediaries involved in the distribution process.
- to advise patients and the general public on the dangers associated with illegal medicine circuits, i.e. illegal pharmacies, illegal sales via the internet, etc.

Examples of associated risks:

- expired medicines;
 - absence of original packaging; the medicines are in bulk;
 - inadequate transportation conditions leading to an alteration of the medicine (temperature, etc.);
 - package information leaflet in a foreign language;
 - counterfeit medicines according to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition²;
 - medicines occasionally not delivered (in the case of internet purchases).
- to procure their stock through reliable sources that comply with good distribution practices.

¹ International Pharmaceutical Federation. FIP Position Statement on Counterfeit Medicines. 2003

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." Guidelines for the Development of Measures to Combat Counterfeit Medicines. WHO Geneva 1999.

- to ensure that storage conditions have been respected throughout the pharmaceutical chain up until the patient purchases the medicine (risk of degradation or inactivation of the active pharmaceutical ingredient, development of toxicity, etc.).
- to take action to maintain medicine quality and safety in the pharmacy by implementing controls and internal procedures for quality assurance.
- to respect good pharmacy practices, in particular using those developed by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP).
- to ensure that the dispensing of medicinal products is carried out under conditions which ensure patient safety, i.e. analysing the request, questioning the patient, providing pharmaceutical advice along with the products by qualified personnel.
- to inform the public on the dangers of self-medicating without first consulting a health professional.
- to inform the national authority in charge of the fight against counterfeit medicines of the cases reported by patients or those suspected by pharmacists themselves.
- to inform the authorities in charge of pharmacovigilance of every unexpected adverse effect reported by a patient or identified by the pharmacist.

The CIOPF members advise the authorities:

- to reinforce pharmaceutical regulations.
- to recognise the specific character of medicinal products and to exempt them from a policy based solely on competition, opening of markets, deregulation and unfair competition.
- to regulate and manage drug manufacturing and importation in order to prevent counterfeit medicines from entering the market.
- to establish regulations ensuring the transparency of all players involved in the drug distribution and dispensing chain.
- to commit to working against all illegal drug dispensing sources, since they indisputably represent an unacceptable level of risk for patients.
- to develop transnational and multidisciplinary strategies for fighting counterfeit medicines introduced into the chain by health professionals. Professional organisations should punish those pharmacists who violate the integrity of pharmaceutical products.
- to express their will that the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations regarding medicine donations be respected. All circuits should provide patients with the same level of safety.

The CIOPF members advise patients:

- to keep in mind that every medicine can be dangerous.
- to avoid using medicines without consulting a health professional.
- to follow the pharmacist's advice every time a medicine is taken.
- to purchase their medicines through the official distribution circuit only.
- to inform the doctor and other health professionals of every medicine used.
- when purchasing medicines via the internet in those countries where this practice is authorised:
 - to verify the essential information that identify the on-line pharmacy: mailing address, telephone number, fax number, proprietor's name, pharmacist's registration number, licence number, etc.
 - when in doubt, to contact the local pharmacists association to verify the legality of the pharmacy.

DECLARATION SIGNATORIES:

The Francophone Pharmacists Associations in attendance in Beirut on 18 February 2006

President of the CIOPF: Mr. Jean Parrot

For the National Pharmacists Associations:

Algeria:

Mr. Abdelfetah Meghezzi-Bekhouche

Benin:

Mrs. Moutiatou Toukourou

Comoros:

Mr. Mohamed Abdoukarim

Congo:

Mr. Hyacinthe Ingani

France:

Mr. Jean Parrot

Guinea:

Mr. Fodé Oussou Fofana

Ivory Coast:

Mr. Charles Boguifo

Lebanon:

Mr. Ziad Nassour

Mauritania:

Mr. Ousmane Bocoum

Morocco:

Mr. Med Laghdaf Rhaoui and Mr. Salaheddine Karim-El-Alaoui

Senegal:

Mr. Yérim Diop

Togo:

Mr. Sakariyaou Tidjani

Tunisia:

Mr. Ali Naas