

# Press release: UK seizes more than £2 million of fake medicines as part of international crackdown

The seizures were part of Interpol's globally coordinated [Operation Pangea](#) initiative involving 116 countries.

Between 9-17 October the MHRA and UK partners found falsified and unlicensed medicines and medical devices in the UK including diazepam, modafinil and dermal fillers.

Using intelligence, MHRA enforcement officers raided a semi-detached property and a small lock-up unit in connection with the illegal supply online of potentially harmful medicines. This led to one arrest.

Raids on the properties in the north of England involved local police and forms part of an international response coordinated through Interpol to the growing illegal trading in online medicines and medical devices. Worldwide, Operation Pangea led to 859 arrests and yielded items worth in the region of £10.9 million.

As well as the property raids, the team also targeted airports and mail delivery centres. During the searches, officers found numerous packages containing illegal consignments of medicines and medical devices including many hidden within other innocent items such as video games and clothing.

The team also targeted websites on the open and dark web that offer falsified and unlicensed medical products. Our action has led to 123 websites being shut down and the removal of 535 online adverts.

MHRA Head of Enforcement Alastair Jeffrey, said:

Criminals who sell medicines over the internet have absolutely no regard for your health and taking medicine which is either falsified or unlicensed puts you at risk of serious harm.

Our intelligence-led enforcement operations have seized millions of counterfeit and unlicensed medicines and devices in the UK. This is just the tip of the iceberg, and we will continue to take action against known criminals – working with our international partners to stop illegal medicines from entering the UK.

To protect your health, visit your GP, get a correct diagnosis and buy medicines from a legitimate high street or registered pharmacy which can trade online with a distance selling logo.

The MHRA has also issued the following safety advice when buying medicines:

## **Be careful when buying medicines online**

Be careful buying medicines online – criminals are known to exploit vulnerable people by supplying medicines through unregulated websites and stealing their credit card details.

## **Do not self-prescribe**

Self-diagnosis and self-medication can be very dangerous. If you have a concern about your health, visit your GP, get a correct diagnosis and if medicines are prescribed, buy them from a legitimate source.

## **Report it!**

If you have any knowledge of criminal activity relating to the medicines offences then you should report this to us to our case referrals email address: [CaseReferrals@mhra.gov.uk](mailto:CaseReferrals@mhra.gov.uk).

If you wish to report a website, you can do so on [our page](#)

You may also provide information anonymously through 0800 555111 or [Crimestoppers](#)

Separately, we [recently worked with law enforcement agencies in India](#) to prevent unlicensed medicines entering the UK.

Ends

## **Notes to Editor**

1. Types of medicines seized include: epilepsy, asthma, acne, narcolepsy, breast cancer, cholesterol reduction, erectile dysfunction, analgesics, hair loss, weight loss, painkillers, fertility, breast/prostate cancer, anxiety/insomnia, skin lightening, anti-depressants, diabetes, premature ejaculation, tanning, pain management, anti-inflammatory, steroids, anti-viral, eye drops, bacterial infection, eczema, eyelash hair growth, depression, hormones, dental equipment, and fake condoms.
2. Operation Pangea is an international initiative to target the illegal internet trade in medicines. It was instigated by the MHRA in April 2006 and started as the UK Internet Day of Action (IDA). There were 116 countries participating in Op Pangea XI.
3. The annual operation is the largest internet based enforcement action of its kind to date and was coordinated by INTERPOL, together with the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Permanent Forum of International Pharmaceutical Crime (PFIPC), the Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group of Enforcement Officers (WGEO), Europol and the Pharmaceutical Security Institute (PSI), and supported by the Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies (CSIP) and private sector companies including LegitScript, Google, Mastercard, Visa, American Express and PayPal.
4. Prescription only medicine should only be taken in consultation with a GP or other healthcare professional. These people have access to patient health records and can take into account the risks and benefits associated with every medicine as well as providing on-going monitoring

of the treatment.