

CRACKING COUNTERFEIT

IRELAND

COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES – THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the amount of counterfeit medicines reaching consumers across Europe through illicit sources such as the internet.

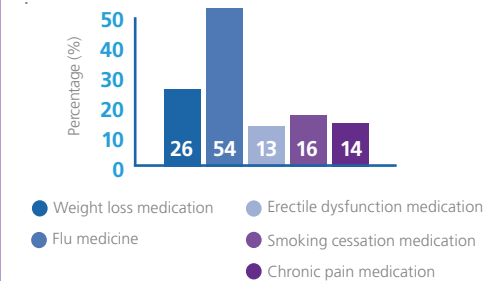
- Seizures at EU borders have increased from just over half a million articles in 2005 to over four million in 2007; a seven-fold rise over two years^{1,2}. More recently, 34 million fake tablets were seized on European borders in just two months³
- The trade in counterfeit medicine sales has exploded and it is now estimated that global counterfeit drug sales will reach \$75 billion by 2010⁴. New research suggests that in Ireland alone the counterfeit medicines market is estimated to be worth more than €86 million every year^{5,6}
- Research suggests that one in five (21%) people in Ireland are putting themselves at risk and admit purchasing prescription only medicine without a prescription – that's over half a million people^{5,6}
- Men are fuelling the problem in Ireland, with 24% of men admitting to buying prescription only medicine without prescription, compared to 18% of women⁵

RECIPE FOR DISASTER

- Counterfeit medicines can contain harmful ingredients such as rat poison, boric acid and lead based road paint^{7,8}
- They can also contain too little or too much active ingredient – some contain no active ingredient at all^{4,9}
- Fake medicines can cause harm to patients and sometimes lead to death⁹
- Counterfeits are often produced by people who have no appropriate qualifications, and in unhygienic surroundings^{10,11}

WHAT DO PEOPLE BUY?

A variety of prescription only medicines are purchased on the internet without a prescription, from life-style to life-saving drugs.



Reported percentage of medicines purchased online without prescription by those people who admitted buying prescription only medicine online without prescription⁵



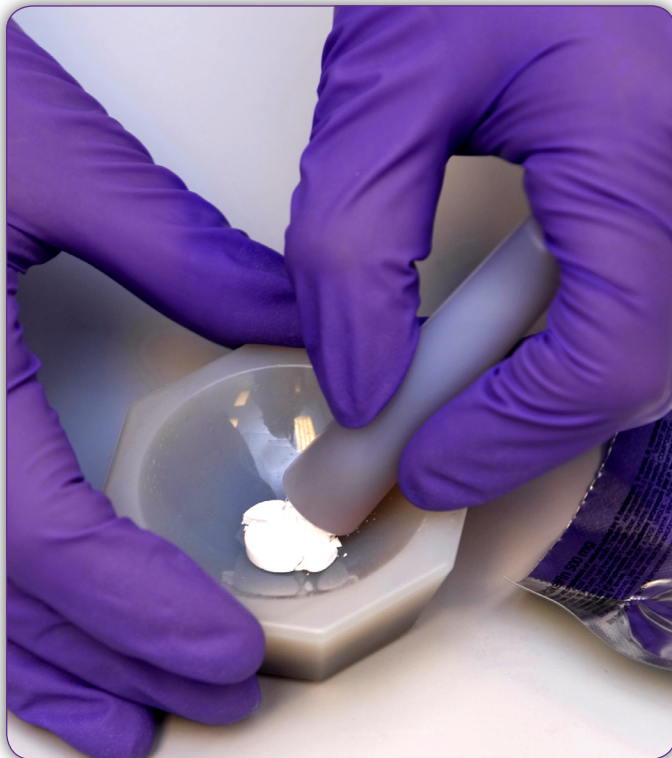
For more information speak to your GP or pharmacist

QUESTION OF TRUST

WHERE ARE THEY BUYING FROM?

Amongst people in Ireland who admitted to purchasing prescription only medicines without prescription, more than a third of purchases (36%) were made over the internet⁵.

- Amongst those who admitted to buying prescription only medicines without prescription:
 - More than half (55%) of purchases were previously bought from websites outside their country⁵
 - Over a sixth of purchases were in response to email/spam advertising the medicines⁵
- Internet security experts report that spam advertising 'Canadian Pharmaceuticals' medicines makes up 70% of all global spam¹²
- A recent keyword search for 'Buy Orlistat' (for weight loss) produced almost 1.5 million results¹³. 'Buy Viagra' produced over 16 million results¹⁴
- It has been estimated that between 50 and 90% of medicines bought from internet sources that conceal their physical address are counterfeit^{10,15}



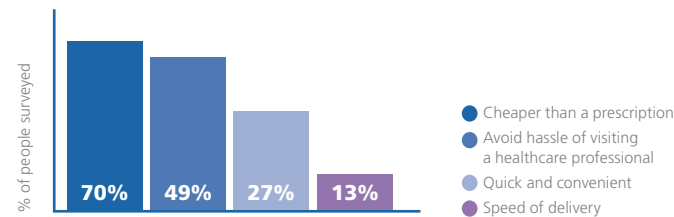
WOULD YOU PURCHASE PRESCRIPTION ONLY MEDICINE WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION?

The research shows that people in Ireland are becoming far too trusting of the internet.

- One in ten (10.4%) are not concerned about the authenticity of products bought online⁵
- One in 20 people surveyed (5%) believe that a prescription only medicine purchased without a prescription is ALWAYS genuine⁵. This belief leaves consumers vulnerable to the threat of counterfeit medicines

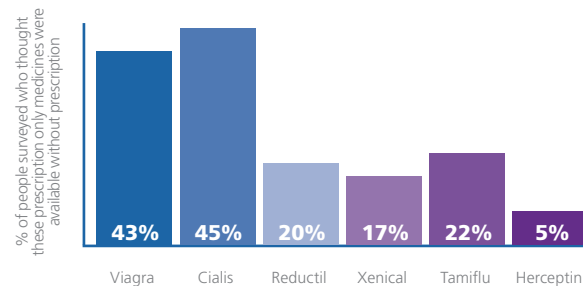
WHY DO CONSUMERS PURCHASE MEDICINES ONLINE?

Over three quarters (83%) of people surveyed said that they consider the internet a convenient place to make purchases⁵, with 73% thinking they can save money by going online rather than going to the high street⁵. Of those who would consider purchasing prescription only medicine without a prescription over the internet, they would do so because⁵:



IGNORANCE

There is evidence to suggest a lack of awareness amongst people in Ireland regarding which medicines require a prescription, and which medicines don't.



A TICKING TIME BOMB?

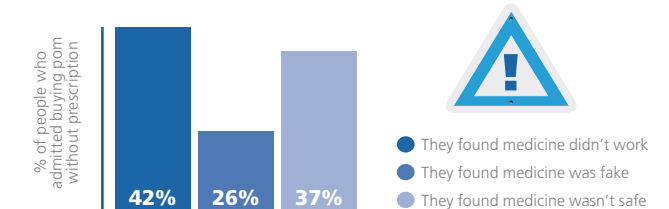
Shockingly, one in seven (14%)⁵ people in Ireland surveyed, which equates to over 400,000 people⁶ in the total population, don't acknowledge that taking prescription only medicine without a prescription is a risky activity, and almost 300,000 people^{5,6} admit they would consider purchasing prescription only medicine without a prescription over the internet, potentially putting themselves at risk to the dangers of counterfeit medicines.

This is despite⁵:

- 64% being concerned about risks to health
- 47% being concerned about the effectiveness of the medication

Shockingly, 12% said the possibility of a medicine being fake would have no impact on their willingness to buy online without a prescription⁵. Counterfeit medicine can damage one's health, and in some cases even cause death. The research suggests a need for greater public education about the dangers of buying prescription only medicines without prescription online. This is supported by findings from the survey, which suggests that nearly three quarters of people (74%) wouldn't buy the medicine if they knew it might be fake⁵.

They would be encouraged to use correct channels in future if⁵:



¹ Report on community customs activities on counterfeit and piracy, European Union, Taxation and Customs Union, 2007. Last accessed November 2009 from http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/resources/documents/customs/customs_controls/counterfeit_piracy/statistics2007.pdf
² Faucherand P. The evolving problem of counterfeiting and piracy. Presentation at Workshop in the Application of Targeted Risk Management on IPRs for Customs and Economic Police. 2-6 April 2007. Last accessed November 2009 from http://www.ecap-project.org/fileadmin/ecapll/pdf/en/activities/national/Vietnam/customs_apr_2007/pierre_faucherand_engl.pdf
³ The Independent. Fake drugs on the rise in the EU. 8 December 2009. Last accessed 08.01.10. <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/fake-drugs-trade-on-the-rise-eu-1835977.html>
⁴ WHO factsheet. Counterfeit medicines. Last revised 14 November 2006. Last accessed November 2009 from http://www.who.int/medicines/services/counterfeit/impact/ImpactF_5/en/
⁵ Nunwood survey data November 2009. Online consumer survey, participants 14,000. Countries included the UK, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Finland and Ireland.
⁶ Nunwood Market Population stats from Eurostat 2008
⁷ Solomon, S. BC Woman killed by fake drugs bought online. National Review of Medicine. 2007; 4:13
⁸ Pfizer data on file
⁹ WHO and IMPACT factsheet. Counterfeit drugs kill! Last accessed November 2009 from <http://www.gphf.org/images/downloads/impactbrochure.pdf>
¹⁰ European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines: The Counterfeiting Superhighway, 2008, Medicom
¹¹ Pfizer data on file
¹² McAfee October 2009 Spam Report. Last accessed November 2009 from http://www.mcafee.com/us/local_content/reports/oct_spam_report.pdf
¹³ 4 December 2009, Google search results, 'Buy Orlistat'
¹⁴ 4 December 2009, Google search results, 'Buy Viagra'
¹⁵ n-PharmaTechnologist News. Last accessed October 2009 from <http://www.in-pharmatechnologist.com/Industry-Drivers/The-global-disaster-of-fake-internet-pharmacies>