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**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE**

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Hsa Participates In International Operation To Combat The Online Supply Of Counterfeit & Illegal Medicines

An international Internet week of action targeting the online sale of counterfeit and illicit medicines has highlighted the dangers of buying such medicines online.

2 Due to an ever-increasing number of websites supplying dangerous and illegal medicines, INTERPOL and the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Taskforce (IMPACT) have launched a coordinated effort among 24 countries this week from 16 to 20 November 2009. Known as Operation Pangea II**, participating countries would, during this dedicated week of action, concentrate on illegal websites in their countries selling illegal medicines.

3 Together with other worldwide national medicines regulators, police and/or customs, the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is the participating agency from Singapore in this global campaign.

Local Internet Surveillance Results

4 This is the 2nd time HSA is participating in this concerted global operation. For this year, HSA has intensified its checks on suspicious websites during this international Internet week of action, in addition to its on-going Internet surveillance program.

5 During this week of intensified Internet checks, 107 Internet platforms (ranging from discussion forums, web blogs, auction sites, online classified advertisements and company websites where health products can be possibly offered for sale) were screened for potential non-compliance with Singapore's medicines' legislation. Of these, four individuals are currently under investigation for illegal sale of medicines which include lifestyle medicines such as those for slimming and oral contraceptives.

Consumer Advisory

6 Findings from the European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines Report 2008 revealed that 62% of medicines purchased online are fake or substandard. Through concerted efforts such as Operation Pangea, INTERPOL and the participating countries hope to remind the public that purchasing medicines from unregulated websites significantly increases the risks of obtaining counterfeit, sub-standard and dangerous products.

7 It is difficult to verify the authenticity of any website, supplier or the medicines offered for sale over the Internet. The products obtained could contain the wrong active ingredient, wrong proportion of an active ingredient, or even without active ingredient. There could be harmful effects to a person's health or could even be fatal. Said Mr Yee Shen Kuan, Division Director of HSA's Enforcement Division, "Some people may be tempted to buy medicines from the Internet because of convenience and competitive prices. But they do not realise that they are ultimately paying a heavier price by exposing themselves to products that are fake, unsafe, adulterated with dangerous or incorrect ingredients due to the lack of quality control at illegal manufacturing sites."

8 HSA invites members of the public to refer to its advisory guide on "Dangers of Buying Medicines and Health Products over the Internet" under "For Consumers" section on HSA's homepage at <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

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▪ About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services, Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. It operates the national blood bank, Bloodbank@HSA, securing the nation's blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

▪ About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards.

▪ **About Operation Pangea II

Operation Pangea II is an international collaborative project with INTERPOL, WHO IMPACT and World Customs Organisation (WCO) to intensify surveillance and enforcement efforts against the illegal sale of health products over the Internet from 16 to 20 Nov 2009. Countries participating in this concerted operation include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, UK and the USA.

The objectives of Operation Pangea II are to enhance public awareness of the risks of purchasing health products over the Internet, as well as to send the message to

potential sellers that regulatory and enforcement agencies worldwide will not tolerate such illegal activities over the Internet.

The first Operation Pangea was conducted last year on 12 Nov 2008 [designated then as the international Internet day of action] with 8 participating countries, including Singapore.