



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
4 OCTOBER 2012**

ABOUT S\$18,000 WORTH OF ILLEGAL HEALTH PRODUCTS SOLD ONLINE SEIZED BY HSA DURING INTERNET BLITZ

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) seized close to 13,000 units of products (e.g. tablets, capsules, strips) amounting to an estimated value of about S\$18,000 as part of a global internet-based enforcement operation targeted at the illegal online sale of unregistered, counterfeit and adulterated health products from 25 September to 2 October 2012. Ten individuals are under investigation for the illegal sale of these products, which include medicines such as oral contraceptives, weight-loss products and medical devices such as contact lenses, condoms and pregnancy test strips.

2 This is the fifth year that HSA is taking part in this operation, known as Operation Pangea. The largest global internet-based action of its kind, Operation Pangea involves 100 countries and 193 participating agencies. It is co-ordinated by INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Permanent Forum of International Pharmaceutical Crime (PFIPC), the Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group of Enforcement Officers (HMA WGEO), the pharmaceutical industry and the electronic payments industry.

3 During the Operation, HSA intensified its checks on suspicious local websites offering medicines and health products, on top of its ongoing internet surveillance activities. These illegal products, comprising unregistered medicinal products and medical devices, were sold over platforms ranging from discussion forums, web blogs, auction sites, online classified advertisements and company websites. A total of 38 internet websites were screened to see whether there were any contraventions under the Medicines Act, Poisons Act and Health Products Act. Of these, 15 sites were found to be selling illegal health products. Follow-up regulatory actions were taken against these illegal online sellers.

Heaviest Court Fine for Online Selling of Illegal Health Products

4 Recently, one individual, a 22-year old woman, was charged in court for selling unregistered medicinal products and medical devices. About 3,000 units of an assortment of oral contraceptives, condoms and pregnancy test kits (See **Annex A**) amounting to a street value of S\$5,685 was seized from her. For committing this offence, and contravening the Medicines Act, Poisons Act and Health Products Act, this woman was fined S\$19,000, the most severe penalty meted out to an individual for

the sale of illegal health products online to-date. This was the first case which involved the illegal sale of both medicinal products and medical devices online and also saw the highest value of products seized from an individual dealing in the illegal sale of health products online.

Consumer Advisory

5 With the growing popularity of online shopping, the Internet has increasingly become an area where products can be sold illicitly and by sellers of all backgrounds. A coordinated effort amongst international regulatory and enforcement agencies is required to combat these illegal online activities and to safeguard public health. To this end, HSA will continue to work with INTERPOL and other partner agencies to clamp down on such activities.

6 “The advent of Internet has prompted many health products to be sold online. We urge consumers not to buy medicinal health products from unreliable sources, including dubious online sites, which might contain ‘false’ or ‘exaggerated’ claims to cure, treat or manage certain disease conditions. There is no guarantee that products purchased online are genuine or safe, as it is difficult to verify the authenticity of any website, supplier, or health products offered for sale over the Internet. Consumers should be discerning when buying medicines for themselves or their family or friends over the Internet, so that they do not become victims of these illegal or counterfeit products that might cause greater harm to their health. When in doubt, always consult your doctor or a pharmacist for proper medical advice and seek medical attention if one has experienced any adverse events,” says Dr Raymond Chua, Group Director, Health Products Regulation Group, HSA.

7 The list of detected and tested illegal health products, based on the information and analytical findings obtained from the physical samples investigated or seized by HSA in Singapore, could be found here: http://www.hsa.gov.sg/publish/hsaportal/en/for_public/illegal_health_products/ihp_search_page.html.

8 Members of the public who have encountered these illegal, counterfeit or adulterated products or any other suspicious products, are encouraged to report them to the Enforcement Branch of HSA at Tel: 6866 3485 or Email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg

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SINGAPORE

▪ **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 and 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. As the national blood service, it is responsible for providing a safe and adequate 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/>.

For more updates on public health and safety matters, follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/HSAsg.

- **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. It contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework.

- **About Operation Pangea**

Operation Pangea is an international collaboration targeting the illegal online sale of counterfeit and unlicensed medicines through raising public awareness of the associated health risks.

Co-ordinated by INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Permanent Forum of International Pharmaceutical crime (PFIPC), the Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group of Enforcement Officers (HMA WGEO), the pharmaceutical industry and the electronic payments industry, this is the fifth year of the global operation.

The number of participating countries has grown from eight to 100 participating countries since its inception in 2008.

Unregistered Medicinal Products and Medical Devices Seized from 22-Year Old Woman



Other Medical Devices Seized During Operation Pangea 2012



About S\$18,000 Worth of Illegal Health Products Sold Online Seized by Hsa During Internet Blitz

http://www.hsa.gov.sg/publish/hsaportal/en/news_events/press_releases/2012/about_s_18_000_worth.html