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HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE

HSA HOSTS 14TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF DRUG REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (ICDRA) IN SINGAPORE WHICH SEES RECORD ATTENDANCE

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) welcomes fellow national medicines regulators to the 14th International Conference of Drug Regulatory Authorities (ICDRA[1]) to be held in Singapore from 30 November to 3 December 2010 in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

2 Held every two years, this year marks the 30th anniversary since WHO first started this important gathering. It is particularly encouraging for HSA and WHO to receive close to 400 members from over 90 countries, the highest rate of participation for the ICDRA to date.

3 ICDRA provides medicines regulatory authorities of WHO Member States with a forum to meet and discuss ways to strengthen collaboration. The ICDRAs have been instrumental in guiding regulatory authorities, WHO and interested stakeholders and in determining priorities for action in national and international regulation of medicines, vaccines, blood products and herbals.

4 Medicines regulators are facing issues that are increasingly global in nature and where the underlying science has become more complex. Medicines regulation itself therefore needs constant development and innovation in order to meet the expectations of the public for safe and effective medicines.

5 To meet these challenges, it has become even more critical for national regulatory authorities to engage in exchange of information and experiences on the requirements of medicines development, relevant regulatory frameworks, and post-marketing enforcement and vigilance issues to enhance access to safe quality medicines.

6 Through the four day programme, the 14th ICDRA aims to provide opportunities for regulators to share and discuss current and topical issues of global concern. For example, access to quality medicines, counterfeit medicines, pharmacovigilance[2], clinical trials and lessons learned from pandemic H1N1.

7 The H1N1 pandemic in 2009 provided global regulators with an immense challenge. There was a need to rapidly approve vaccines without compromising on the quality of the evaluation and ensure that the wider healthcare systems were able to implement a vaccination program effectively. The responsiveness of regulatory authorities to the pandemic reflected investments made in preparedness planning, including implementation of a good communication strategy and provision of independent advice on the quality and safety of vaccines. Learning from this experience will ensure that we are better prepared for any future pandemic, whenever it comes.

8 On the topic of counterfeit medicines that is also on the agenda, this remains a daunting challenge to healthcare systems in ensuring the safety of millions of patients across the world. As the counterfeiters continue to improve their ability to copy genuine medicines, regulators must stay ahead, in terms of developing effective systems to detect counterfeit products and work with other law enforcement agencies, such as INTERPOL, to bring perpetrators to justice. This is really a global problem, faced by both developing and developed nations. Therefore, platforms such as the ICDRA are crucial to regulators to share experience and best practices.

9 In conjunction with the 14th ICDRA, a Pre-Conference meeting, entitled "Effective Collaboration: The Future for Medicines Regulation", was held from 28 – 29 November 2010. Dr John Lim, CEO of HSA stated, "We recognise the value of building networks among regulators, sharing knowledge and leveraging on each others' strengths. Such ongoing collaboration enhances the ability of national medicines regulators to ensure safer and faster access of high quality medicines for our populations."

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- **About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is a multidisciplinary agency that 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. 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 www.hsa.gov.sg.

- **[1]About ICDRA**

Since 1980, the International Conference of Drug Regulatory Authorities (ICDRA) has been providing drug regulatory authorities of WHO Member States with a forum to meet and discuss ways to strengthen collaboration. It continues to be an important tool for WHO and drug regulators in their efforts to harmonize regulation and improve the safety, efficacy and quality of medicines globally

Its objectives include:

- To promote collaboration between national drug regulatory authorities
- To forge a consensus on matters of mutual interest
- To facilitate timely and adequate exchange of technical information
- To discuss contemporaneous issues of international relevance

- **[2]About Pharmacoviglance**

Pharmacovigilance is a key tool for drug regulatory authorities to continually keep a watchful look on the safety of drugs in the market. It involves the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse drug reactions.