



Designing and enforcing deterrent legislations

LEADING THE FIGHT AGAINST A DANGEROUS CRIME

People participating in the production and traffic of falsified medicines are criminals. They intentionally deceive patients and put lives at risk. Yet, existing legislation and enforcement do not reflect the severity of this crime or sufficiently deter criminals.

A [study](#) presented by the Institute of Research Against Counterfeit Medicines (IRACM) finds that these criminal organizations fall into three categories:

- **Small-sized organizations:** Often created by a few opportunistic individuals motivated by short-term gains.
- **Medium-sized transnational organizations:** Often groups related to organized crime, opportunistic businessmen using sophisticated techniques or people directly connected to the pharmaceutical industry.
- **Large-scale and transnational organizations:** These include two particularly significant cases:
 - o The RxNorth case, in which a Canadian distributor, in parallel with its business, organized a complex system to import falsified medicines from China into the United States through Hong Kong, the Middle East, the UK and the Bahamas.
 - o The "Jordanian-Syrian" network, which was created during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, evolved into multiple regional subnetworks and eventually penetrated European and US markets. This case is thought to be the largest criminal network of medicine counterfeiting still active.

IFPMA calls on all governments to strengthen their legislation and enforcement to deter falsified medicines. Currently, creating falsified medicines is easy, cheap and lucrative, with a low risk of apprehension or punishment. According to the WHO, only a few countries have enacted special national legislation focused on falsified medicines, and sanctions imposed on counterfeiters are rarely sufficient to stop this crime. Effective action requires strong legislative frameworks that criminalize falsification and respond with adequate penalties and strict enforcement.

IFPMA, EFPIA, PhRMA, together with associations representing generic manufacturers (IGBA, EGA, GPhA) invite governments to join and ratify the **Medicrime Convention**, a unique international tool to deter falsified medicines, thereby **protecting public health, criminalizing counterfeiting, and ensuring national and international cooperation.**

In particular, the Medicrime Convention:

- Makes falsification a criminal offence
- Fosters effective prosecution
- Seizes proceeds from falsification
- Ensures national and international cooperation to fight this crime



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EMERGING PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT: ILLEGAL ONLINE PHARMACIES

The Internet is a growing global marketplace for falsified medicines. Tens of thousands of illegal websites sell unsafe and poor quality medicines online, while pretending to be legitimate pharmacies. This is a central challenge in the fight against falsified medicines: more than 50% of medicines purchased worldwide from illegal online sources that conceal their physical address are falsified.



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Together, these websites form a multimillion dollar industry. For example, the Japanese Customs Office made over 500 discoveries of falsified medicines and seized almost 80,000 drugs in 2011, a majority of which were purchased online.

These websites are not just deceptive – they harm patients. A recent study found that 96% of websites delivering medicines to American patients did not meet patient safety standards and/or pharmacy practice standards according to US state and federal laws. Yet, few patients are aware of these dangers. 74% of Americans who purchased medicines online were not aware there was a risk involved, and 78% of Europeans who bought medications through online pharmacies felt that they were purchasing in a safe environment.

IFPMA, together with EFPIA, PhRMA and JPMA, encourages all governments to address the growing number of illegitimate online pharmacies by exploring opportunities to strengthen laws and enforcement tools.

Heightened public awareness and education are also critical. Governments and other stakeholders can develop robust awareness programs focused on the dangers of purchasing falsified medicines online and how to purchase safe medicines from lawful sources. Initiatives like the Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies in the EU and US and CSIP (Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies) are raising public awareness and inviting authorities to “evaluate policies and legal measures to tackle illegal online sales”.