

COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES, ILLEGAL ONLINE DRUG SELLERS TARGETED IN CONSUMER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN (#BuySafeRx)

WASHINGTON, DC (May 14, 2015) – With the proliferation of illegal online pharmacies, the [Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies](#) (ASOP Global) has launched “**Buy Safe Rx**”, a new campaign to educate consumers about the potentially life-threatening health and financial risks associated with buying counterfeit prescription medicines online and provide the information they need to stay safe.

“These days, buying prescription drugs on the Internet is easy, but finding a safe source for those medicines is not,” explained [ASOP Global Founder and Executive Director Libby Baney](#). “Of the 35,000-50,000 active online drug sellers, 97 percent do not comply with U.S. laws and 50 percent of medicines sold online are fake or counterfeit. Buying prescription drugs from rogue online pharmacies also endangers consumers’ financial information and puts consumers at risk of identity theft,” she added.

Counterfeit products sold by illegal online drug sellers often are manufactured in unsafe conditions; contain no active ingredients; and/or contain dangerous substances including floor wax, mercury, concrete, chalk, boric acid, road tar, paint, anti-freeze and other poisons. “This means that consumers are just a click away from buying products that may cause harm, treatment failure or even death,” Baney said.

Since its inception in 2009, ASOP Global has been dedicated to addressing the growing public health threat of illegal online drug sellers through strategic efforts around the world, concentrating its activities in research, education, Internet commerce company voluntary actions, and policy and advocacy. “ASOP Global is singularly focused on the issue of online pharmacies and united in its mission to combat illegal online drug sellers, ensure access to safe medications and protect patient safety,” Baney added.

In a [new report](#) issued in April 2015 by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy® (NABP®), an ASOP Global observer, NABP® reviewed nearly 11,000 Internet drug outlets, finding that 96.2 percent (10,544) of the sites reviewed operate out of compliance with U.S. pharmacy laws and practice standards. The report also found that approximately 88.3 percent of NABP’s “Not Recommended” sites are selling prescription drugs without requiring a valid prescription. In addition, approximately 62 percent do not provide a valid address, and nearly 50 percent offer drugs that are either foreign, or not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Further, of the 10,521 “Not Recommended” sites, 91 percent can be traced to affiliate networks of rogue Internet drug outlets.

WHAT CONSUMERS CAN DO TO STAY SAFE

Many rogue websites use photos of “doctors” and other flashy sales techniques which lead unsuspecting customers to mistakenly believe the dispensing “pharmacy” is legitimate. To stay safe, consumers avoid websites that: (1) do not require a valid prescription; (2) sell prescription medications merely by completing an online questionnaire; (3) send unsolicited emails offering ‘too good to be true’ drug prices; (4) ship prescription drugs worldwide; (5) do not have a licensed pharmacist available for consultation; (6) do not have a physical street address; and (7) are located outside the U.S. or are not licensed in the U.S. by a state agency.

(more)

“Consumers should visit NABP’s [Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites](#) (VIPPS) program; [LegitScript](#), the leading source of Internet pharmacy verification globally; or contact their [state board of pharmacy](#) to determine whether an online pharmacy is legitimate,” Baney advised. “They also can trust websites that end in the .pharmacy top-level domain (e.g. [www.safe.pharmacy](#)) since only legitimate Internet pharmacies and pharmacy-related websites will qualify for .pharmacy domains, giving consumers a way to distinguish safe and legal online pharmacies and resources from rogue sites.”

REAL LIFE STORIES

- A 30 year old man who purchased an anxiety drug and a painkiller from a rogue website that did not require a doctor’s prescription. After taking the products he received, he nearly died and has permanent brain damage.
- A patient died from heavy metal poisoning caused by the contaminated prescription medications she purchased online. The drugs had been shipped from overseas and contained deadly levels of lead, titanium and arsenic.
- A 27 year-old paramedic was found dead in her apartment after accidentally ingesting a fatal dose of medication purchased online. The drug contained four times the therapeutic level of active ingredients.
- A Texas emergency room doctor suffered a stroke from ingesting a counterfeit medication purchased online that contained a controlled substance rather than the approved ingredient.
- A 23-year-old medical student purchased what she thought was a popular diet pill online only to find out it contained a pesticide with lethal consequences to humans.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY

“Everyone has a role to play,” Baney said. “ASOP Global works with policymakers, law enforcement officials, non-profits, and domestic and international organizations to help educate consumers and advocate for effective means to safeguard them illegal online drug sellers. As long as people are at risk of receiving dangerous, illegitimate products through rogue websites, ASOP Global will do everything it can to protect consumers worldwide.”

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ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR SAFE ONLINE PHARMACIES

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the [Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies](#) (ASOP Global) is an international 501(c)(4) social welfare organization dedicated to protecting patient safety globally and ensuring patient access to safe and legitimate online pharmacies in accordance with applicable laws. [Members](#) include organizations representing pharmacists, pharmacies and physicians; patient safety groups; public health organizations; pharmaceutical manufacturers; government entities; and Internet security organizations.

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