



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS HAVE A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY IN EDUCATING PATIENTS ABOUT ILLEGAL ONLINE PHARMACIES

WASHINGTON, DC (December 15, 2016) – The [Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies](#) (ASOP Global) is partnering with the American Medical Association (AMA), American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and 14 other [national non-profit organizations](#)\* to raise awareness of illegal online drug sellers and counterfeit medications by educating and enlisting the help of healthcare providers across the country. ASOP Global also launched [www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy](http://www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy) where providers, patients and caregivers can quickly and easily verify whether an Internet pharmacy website is safe and legal.

“With more than 6 million doctors, pharmacists, nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants in the U.S., healthcare providers can play a significant role in educating patients about the risks associated with purchasing medications online and how to stay safe,” explained [ASOP Global Executive Director Libby Baney](#).

“Helping patients understand their medical conditions and treatment options is just part of what we do,” explained American Medical Association President, Andrew W. Gurman, MD. “In addition, we should talk with patients about all of their medications, including how to purchase them from a safe source – especially if they are considering buying them online. This will result in stronger patient-physician relationships and, most importantly, improved patient outcomes.”

ASOP Global and the Federation of State Medical Boards also worked with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, University of California San Diego and LegitScript to develop [“Internet Drug Sellers: What Providers Need to Know”](#), a free online continuing education program (CME/CPE) for pharmacists and physicians.

To date more than 1,000 providers have participated in the program. Before taking the course, less than 10% said they were “very aware” that counterfeit prescription drugs are being sold on the Internet. An even smaller percentage – **only 1.4%** – said they regularly discuss the risks of illegal internet drug sellers with patients. “After completing the course, however, there was a ten-fold increase in the expected frequency in which providers planned to discuss the risks associated with buying prescription medicines online with their patients and what they can do to avoid physical and financial harm,” Baney said.

“The data clearly demonstrates how important it is for healthcare providers to be educated about this issue and have access to the tools and resources ASOP Global is providing to keep patients safe,” said American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Executive Vice president and CEO, Thomas E. Menighan, BSPHarm, FAPhA. “As medication experts and one of the most accessible members of the healthcare team, pharmacists have a unique opportunity to share those resources with their patients.”

(more)

\* Academy for Managed Care Pharmacy, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American Medical Association, American Pharmacists Association, American Society for Health-System Pharmacists, Federation of State Medical Boards, Gerontological Society of America, Healthcare Distribution Alliance, National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, National Association of Chain Drug Stores, National Consumers League, National Council for Patient Information and Education, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Purdue College of Pharmacy's Center for Medication Safety Advancement and the U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention

## About Illegal Online Pharmacies and Counterfeit Medicines

A recent review by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy of more than 11,000 websites selling prescription medications to U.S. consumers found approximately 96% do not comply with U.S. laws.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 50% of medicines sold online from websites that hide their physical address are counterfeit, and 89% of illegal online pharmacies don't require a prescription.<sup>2</sup>

"The risks associated with buying prescription medicines from illegal online drug sellers marketing themselves as legitimate Internet pharmacies cannot be overstated," Baney said. "Counterfeit drugs often contain little or no active ingredients or, worse yet, dangerous and deadly poisons, including floor wax, mercury, concrete, chalk, boric acid, road tar, paint or anti-freeze."

According to a [report](#) issued earlier this year by ASOP Global and LegitScript, 65% of Internet search results for prescription drugs lead U.S. consumers to illegal and unsafe websites<sup>3</sup> and 20 new Internet pharmacy websites are launched every day<sup>4</sup>.

Worth \$200 billion a year, the market for counterfeit pharmaceuticals now eclipses almost everything else in the underground economy, including prostitution, human trafficking and illegal arms sales.<sup>5</sup>

"In addition to the health risks, illegal pharmacy sites are often not secure, placing unknowing consumers at increased risk for fraud and identity theft by providing these criminal enterprises with personal and credit card information," Baney explained. "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 a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the threat of illegal online drug sellers and making the Internet safe for consumers worldwide through advocacy, research and education.

## MEDIACONTACTS

[Caren Kagan Evans](#)  
ECI Communications  
301-998-6114  
301-467-6337(cell)

[Jayme Soulati](#)  
ECI Communications  
937-312-1363  
937-232-2529 (cell)

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<sup>1</sup> [Internet Drug Outlet Identification Program](#), National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, 2016

<sup>2</sup> [Buying Medicine Online – What Are the Risks](#), National Association of Boards of Pharmacy

<sup>3</sup> [Online Pharmacy Market Spotlight Report: The United States](#), ASOP Global and LegitScript, July 2016

<sup>4</sup> [The Internet Pharmacy Market in 2016](#), LegitScript and the Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies, January 2016

<sup>5</sup> [Counterfeiting: An Industry Three Times Larger than the Illicit Global Drug Trade](#), Sophic Capital, 2014