

Many silver bullets needed to cure the Internet of falsified medicines and fake Covid-19 treatments

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2020 (LONDON) – In response to the [newly released report](#) by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) entitled “Illicit Trade in Counterfeit Pharmaceutical Products,” the Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacy in the EU (ASOP EU) applauds the research conducted to better highlight and quantify the pervasive threat of illegal online drug sellers. According to the report, the value of the falsified medicines is an astonishing USD4 billion worldwide.

The impact of the global illicit drug trade on national health systems is considerable and incidents of [patient harm](#) are well recorded. The harm to individuals is covered comprehensively and reveals the high mortality rate due to falsified anti-biotics and anti-malarials to name two therapeutic areas.

With medicines being sold throughout various channels on the internet and via social media, it is clear that this problem requires an urgent and comprehensive solution. And with 96% of the 35,000 active online pharmacy websites worldwide who are operating illegally this brings the problem in to sharp focus.

Mike Isles ASOP EU Executive Director at the launch meeting said:

“There is no one silver bullet so it requires many silver bullets and coordination amongst a myriad of public- and private-sector partners. And with an estimated 130 million people potentially buying medicines across Europe urgent action is needed. This is especially important as we see false and predatory promises and misguided advertisements around potential treatments or cures for COVID-19”

The video intervention can be viewed [here](#).

In this context the [European Medicines Agency](#) is now urging the general public not to buy medicines from unauthorised websites and other vendors aiming to exploit fears and concerns during the ongoing pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). ASOP EU echoes these concerns and encourages patients, caregivers and others to leverage existing resources to better inform themselves of the risks associated with the online purchase of prescription drugs. Additional resources from ASOP EU can be found [here](#) and for the European citizen vital advice can be found [here](#).

The key to solving the problem is for the public to understand the risks involved. Stemming the demand is essential so that criminals do not have a market. were operated illegally then again depending on the country up to 65% were not aware of this. Research by ASOP EU revealed that awareness amongst the public is woefully low and was up to 65% in one of the countries studied.

So what are the solutions?

1. **Raising public awareness** – Under the EU [Falsified Medicines Directive](#) each Member State is obliged to inform the public about falsified medicines. Research by ASOP EU has shown that this is woefully low. Initiatives such as the [Youth IGF Movement](#) is gathering momentum.

2. **The Internet ecosystem** – all actors: ICANN, registries, registrars, search engines, social media, e-commerce platforms must accelerate proactive actions to raise governance standards and adopt good practices.
3. **Offer a safe haven for the consumer/patient** – sellers of medicines should adopt the suffix [.pharmacy](#) and governments should be encouraged to explore similar solutions for their country.

In conclusion, ASOP EU highly commends this OECD and EUIPO report. It brings together all of the important elements to analyse the extent of the growing problem but also highlights the good work that is being done and equally points us in new directions to find solutions to the problem.

ABOUT ASOP EU

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacy in the EU (ASOP EU) is a not for profit Community Interest Company and represents a multi-sectorial coalition of organisations and individuals, dedicated to creating an environment that enables patients to buy their medicines online safely (where it is legal to do so). To find out more about ASOP EU and ASOP Global please visit the website www.buysaferx.pharmacy.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Mike Isles Executive Director of ASOP EU is available to speak on matters relating to the selling of medicines online. Please send media inquiries [here](#). To speak with [Libby Baney](#), partner at Faegre Drinker Consulting and senior advisor to ASOP Global, please email [Elizabeth Harmon](#).