

Fake Viagra raises concerns over supply chain

Nick O'Donoghue

CONCERNS are being raised over the integrity of the pharmacy supply chain after counterfeit Viagra was supplied to a number of pharmacies.

A spokesman for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia described the discovery of fake medications in the wholesale supply line as "a very disturbing matter".

The Guild has welcomed the Therapeutic Goods Administration's investigation into the source of the counterfeit drugs, which distributor Symbion Pharmacy Services said were obtained from a licensed independent wholesaler in New South Wales.

"There are only three formal line wholesalers in Australia, Symbion, Sigma and API and that official wholesale line is sacrosanct and it has to be totally uncontaminated,



VIAGRA: Guild concerned over counterfeit supply.

so this is a very disturbing matter.

"As to how and why that would happen in that way, and why they [Symbion] wouldn't source such products from the manufacturer, Pfizer, that's a matter for them to explain," the Guild spokesman said.

The Guild stressed pharmacists in NSW, the ACT and Victoria obtained the counterfeit medication assuming it was authentic and only became aware of problems with the product when consumers reported it was ineffective.

A spokesman for Symbion told

Pharmacy eNews the source of the counterfeit medication could not be revealed for legal reasons.

"Symbion Pharmacy Services has become aware of a small quantity of counterfeit product that has entered its supply chain in New South Wales.

"Symbion sourced the product from a local independent wholesaler licensed in New South Wales in good faith.

"Once Symbion became aware, we immediately notified Pfizer and we have since been working closely with them and the Therapeutic Goods Administration on a recall," the spokesman said.

As reported in yesterday's *Pharmacy eNews*, pharmacists are being urged to quarantine supplies of the counterfeit product, which has the batch number 314 833 021.

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Pharmacists to help recruit patients for study

Nick O'Donoghue

PHARMACISTS are being asked to help identify people with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) to take part in three international studies.

The trials will investigate a new once-a-day medication for the treatment of people with potentially life-threatening respiratory diseases.

Respiratory specialist from Monash University, Professor Philip Bardin said pharmacists were in a good position to help identify patients who could benefit from trying a new treatment.

"Current treatments for asthma

and COPD require patients to take their medicine twice daily, which can lead to issues with compliance if people forget to take their medication.

"The inhaler therapy being tested in these international studies requires only once-a-day usage that may help to improve regular use of the medicine and longer-term management of disease.

"Because they know which patients are being prescribed medications for respiratory diseases, pharmacists are well placed to identify those patients whose condition is not adequately controlled and may benefit from participating in a study investigating new

treatment options," he said.

Research centres in every state and territory, except the Northern Territory, have commenced recruitment for the three trials.

Participation in the studies is open to patients with asthma who are aged 12 and older and people over 40 with COPD.

To be eligible for the trials patients must have had an exacerbation of their condition in the last 12 months, as measured by needing oral steroids, visiting hospital or being admitted to hospital.

For more information patients interested in taking part in the research can call 1800 800 825.

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FROM THE GUILD PRESIDENT - KOS SCLAVOS

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Pharmacy workforce – planning based on facts



THERE has been much industry discussion about the intake of pharmacy student numbers at universities and the ability of those students to find jobs as pharmacists when they complete their studies.

Up to now the discussion has not been based on scientific data. The Pharmacy Workforce Planning Research Project funded under the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement has recently released their full report.

This project predicts where we are headed and the Guild's formal response to the profession will be based on this report.

The result has been a long time coming as the project by Human Capital Alliance started in December 2007.

The project was intended to build upon work undertaken in two previous studies of the pharmacy workforce initiated by the Guild in 1999 and 2003 and identified current and ongoing workforce demands.

Past planning of the pharmacy workforce has focused on predicting future pharmacist supply and demand.

This approach did not allow for exploration of outcomes in the case of significant variation from the preferred assumptions of the planning model, a situation particularly problematic when new roles for pharmacists have been established under the new agreement recently signed between the Federal Government and the Guild.

This research placed less emphasis on a definitive forecast for the pharmacy labour market, and instead attempted to create

a strong and robust platform from which a range of feasible future scenarios could be fashioned and examined.

A comparatively simple Pharmacy Workforce Planning Model was thus created using standard Excel software with an even simpler user friendly interface.

The model allows examination of demand and supply through 35 separate variables each of which has a range of potential values.

These values have been set as a continuum between reasonable 'high' and 'low' estimates around a median 'best estimate' to form a default or 'best estimate' scenario which can be called up by the model and used for generating new scenarios.

A large number of labour market scenario estimates of supply and demand can be generated from the model.

The model does not take into consideration the recently signed agreement nor changes to the overseas pharmacist immigration

criteria.

Running the model for the 'best estimate' scenario results in a forecast future labour market in 2025 where supply is projected to grow at a compound rate of 3.2 per cent (adding 11,237 FTE pharmacists to the workforce), and total demand at a rate of 2.4 per cent (adding 7654 FTE pharmacists to the demand for pharmacist labour).

Now that there is a working adaptable model recent changes will be added to the model and the impact assessed.

With the data now available it is important for universities and the profession in general to take responsibility for planning decisions and for the students they take on with the aim of ensuring their prospects for full employment are high.

Based on this updated data the Guild will be issues a position in coming weeks.

The research report is available [HERE](#).

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