



Sharing of HSA's experience in managing online sales of health products

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Outline

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Overview

- With the growing popularity of e-commerce, the Internet has increasingly become a platform for the selling health products such as western medicines, health supplements, traditional medicines and medical devices etc.
- The borderless nature of the Internet makes it hard to tell who the sellers really are, whether the products are genuine, of good quality, or safe etc.

Current Status

- In Singapore, 84% of the population is now internet users, and 93% of these population spent on average, 7 hours and nine minutes everyday on the Internet
- With this proliferation, health products are made easily available through the use of smart devices and cashless payment systems through various Internet platforms such as :
 - E-commerce platforms - eBay.com, amazon.com, Lazada.sg, Shopee.sg, Qoo10.sg, Carousell.sg, Taobao, Alibaba
 - Social platforms - Facebook, Instagram, web blogs
 - Online discussion forums - hardwarezone.com.sg, singapore.gumtree.sg
 - Company based websites
- In Singapore, we observed the following products are being commonly sold :
 - Unregistered health products (e.g. powered contact lenses, thermometers, blood pressure monitors, prescription medicines)
 - Adulterated complementary health products (e.g. energy/vitality supplements, slimming products, whitening cosmetics)

Local Observations / Trends

- Products sold are unused stocks (e.g. get rid of unwanted stocks)
- Products sold are stocks bought from overseas and resold for profit
- More recently, online sellers have shifted to taking preorders instead of keeping stocks for supply
- Increase number of consumers making online purchase due to non availability of certain products in local market (eg certain brands of health supplements, cosmetics, therapeutic products or medical devices, which likely are not able to pass through the rigorous process of registration or listing)

Various Products Seized from Online Sellers



Examples of Adulterated Products

Product Name	Indications	Test results
基因育根(JiYinYuGen)	Sexual enhancement	Diclofenac, Sibutramine, Sildenafil, Tadalafil
享硬(XiangYing)	Sexual enhancement	Sildenafil, Tadalafil
Maxman Ultimate	Sexual enhancement	Sibutramine
Man Up	Sexual enhancement	Dimethylsildenafil, Thiodimethylsildenafil
Cula Mas Obat Kuat Pria Dewasa	Sexual enhancement	Sildenafil
Bio-Lissom (fat reducing caps)	Slimming	Desmethylsibutramine, Sibutramine, Phenolphthalein
脱脂 LPA	Slimming	Sibutramine, Desmethylsibutramine
收腹提臂	Slimming	Sibutramine, Phenolphthalein
奥露娜左旋肉碱	Slimming	Sibutramine, Phenolphthalein
瀚美堂左旋肉碱	Slimming	Phenolphthalein, Sibutramine, Desmethylsibutramine
Reduce Weight Fruta Planta (水果植物)	Slimming	Sibutramine, Phenolphthalein
Botanical Slimming	Slimming	Sibutramine

NOTE: The product details and tests results reflected in table above are based strictly on the information obtained from the actual physical samples as well as the analytical findings of the illegal health products, which were investigated or seized by HSA in Singapore. These may or may not be the same as other products with similar sounding names, packaging or product details marketed over the Internet or in other overseas jurisdictions.

HSA's Enforcement Approach

HSA takes a multi-pronged enforcement approach to manage online sales of health products:

- **Prevention**

- Close collaboration web administrators to prevent listings of unsafe health products
- Public education and awareness campaigns
- Well-developed legislation with heavy penalties (Fine of up to \$100,000 or imprisonment up to 3 years or both)

- **Detection**

- Use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to proactively monitor listings on online platforms
- Conduct product quality sampling activities at retail outlets and online websites
- Spontaneous adverse event reporting system
- Local and international collaborations with enforcement and regulatory agencies

- **Response**

- Timely removal postings of illegal health products when detected
- Investigations into non-compliances
- Joint operations with international agencies e.g INTERPOL
- Punitive actions against offenders

“Prevention” Measures

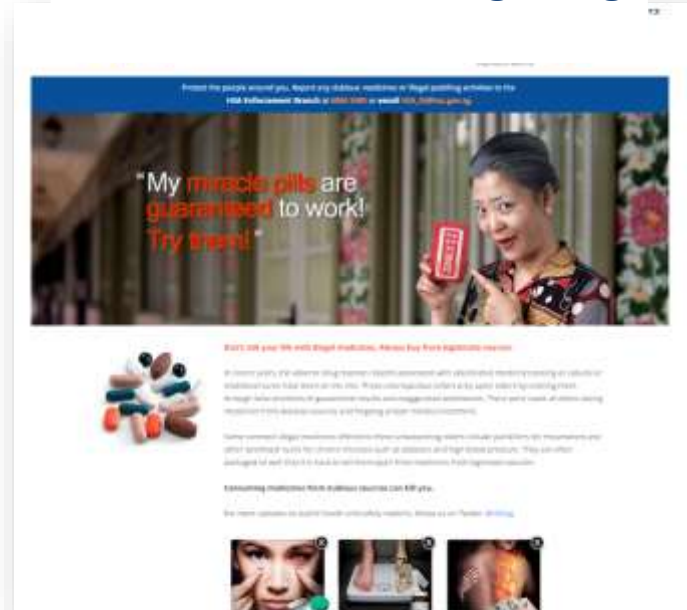
- **Prevention**

- Send prohibited lists of products, alerts, press releases to web administrators for their proactive scanning to prevent listings of unsafe health products

- HSA has a microsite “healthdangers.sg” which educates sellers and consumers on the risks associated with selling or buying health products online.

- A video to raise consumer awareness on the risks of buying health products from dubious online sources can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmjl_bSjJgA

Microsite: healthdangers.sg



Legislative Infrastructure

Legislation

Health Products Act
Medicines Act
Poisons Act

Manufacture

Import

Supply

“Detection” Measures

Collaborations with Interpol - HSA participated in the global operation, Pangea, which targets the online sale of counterfeit and illicit medicines and medical devices. During the coordinated week, HSA intensified surveillance against local websites to detect and disrupt the online sale of illegal health products in Singapore

“Response” Measures

- Collaborations with web administrators
 - Close collaborations with web administrators for timely removal of listings/ trace sellers etc
 - Recalcitrant sellers are taken to task under our regulatory framework
- Joint ops with international enforcement agencies

“Response” Measures

Press Release



HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
25 SEPTEMBER 2017

HSA SEIZES MORE THAN 39,000 UNITS OF ILLEGAL HEALTH PRODUCTS CONTAINING BANNED SUBSTANCES WITH STREET VALUE OF OVER \$133,000 DURING INTERPOL-COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL OPERATION

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) participated in the tenth instalment of Operation Pangea, coordinated by INTERPOL, from 12 to 19 September 2017. During the week, HSA intensified surveillance against local websites to detect and disrupt the online sale of illegal health products. More than 39,000 units of illegal health products including weight loss products, sexual enhancement drugs (SEDs) and cosmetics were seized, with an estimated total street value of over \$133,000. Three persons are currently assisting HSA in the investigations. Please refer to **Annex A** for photographs of the products seized.

2 Of the weight loss products seized and tested, 90% was found to contain the banned substance, sibutramine. Some of the products also contained other potent medicinal ingredients such as diuretics (to help the body get rid of excess fluid) and antihistamines (for relief of allergies). These adulterated products include ‘DZ Garcinia Herbal Plus’, ‘Gorgeousleem Advanced Capsule’, ‘Figure-Up Slimming Pill’ and ‘XXS Advance’.

3 Aside from weight loss products, several brands of cosmetic products were seized. Notably, ‘Tati Skincare’, an illegal cosmetic product which HSA had alerted the public to in June 2017¹ for its high mercury level and potent prohibited ingredients, resurfaced online in September 2017, advertised as a “new and improved Tati Skincare”. Repackaging the same product is a tactic undertaken by illegal manufacturers in an attempt to evade authorities’ detection and entice consumers. Analysis of the newly-packaged ‘Tati Skincare’ found that like its predecessor, there was purposeful addition of potent ingredients. For example, ‘Therapy Cream 1’ contained high levels of mercury while ‘Therapy Cream 2’ contained hydroquinone and tretinoin.

4 We are directing website administrators to remove these advertisements that were posted online so as to curb further sales of these illegal products to the public.

News Articles



25 Sep 2017 08:01 PM
Updated: 25 Sep 2017 08:10 PM

Singapore More than 39,000 illegal health products seized in online crackdown



The items are said to have a street value of over \$133,000. (Photo: HSA)

SINGAPORE: The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) seized more than 39,000 units of illegal health products, including weight-loss products, sexual enhancement drugs and cosmetics during an operation against online retailers this month.



39,000 slimming, beauty and sex enhancement products seized



by CHEN JINGWEN
ASIAONE | 25 Sep 2017

Be wary of slimming products sold on local websites.

Nine in 10 of the products seized by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) recently were found to contain sibutramine, a banned substance.

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Seized Products During Operations Pangea



Challenges

- Rapidly changing and increasing complex environment (e.g. new e-commerce platforms/payment methods facilitating online sales)
- Different controls and regulations amongst countries (eg Yohimbine in health supplement allowed to be sold in USA is prohibited for sale in Singapore)

Conclusions and Way Forward

- Fostering Partnerships amongst drug regulatory authorities, enforcement agencies and the pharmaceutical industry to enhance the effectiveness of our actions to combat illegal online sales of health products
- Measures include establishing channels of communications between the authorities/web administrators for purposes of information sharing and possible investigations

