

IMPACT

(International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Taskforce)

Frequently asked questions

1) What is IMPACT?

Responding to the growing public health crisis of counterfeit drugs, in February 2006, the World Health Organization launched the International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Taskforce (IMPACT). At its core, IMPACT aims to build coordinated networks across and between countries in order to halt the production, trading and selling of fake medicines around the globe. IMPACT is a partnership comprised of all the major anti-counterfeiting players, including: international organizations, non-governmental organizations, enforcement agencies, pharmaceutical manufacturers associations and drug and regulatory authorities.

2) Why do we need IMPACT?

Counterfeit medicines and other health products can have harmful effects on patients' health, including death in worst case scenarios. These fake products are also detrimental to public health efforts to deal with disease in countries which are already stretched thin with limited resources for health care.

The counterfeiting of medicines has been a problem for at least two decades in many countries around the world. As international markets expand and become globalized the problem has extended to all countries and regions; even though it remains more prevalent in developing countries. The increase in the commercial use of the Internet has also contributed to a growth of the problem as many fake products are sold illegally on unauthorized web sites.

3) Who participates in the taskforce?

The World Health Organization spearheaded the creation of the IMPACT partnership which includes representatives from the following organizations; Interpol, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Customs Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Trade Organization, International Federation of Pharmaceutical and Manufacturers' Associations, International Generic Pharmaceuticals Alliance, World Self-medication Industry, Asociacion Latinoamericana de Industrias Farmaceuticas, World Bank, European Commission, Council of Europe, Commonwealth Secretariat, ASEAN Secretariat, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers, European Association of Pharmaceutical Full-line Wholesalers, International Pharmaceutical Federation, International Council of Nurses, World Medical Association, and Pharmaciens sans frontières.

4) How will the IMPACT partnership work?

IMPACT is comprised of five working groups which address the areas where action is needed to combat the spread of counterfeits. The five groups include; legislative and regulatory infrastructure; regulatory implementation; enforcement; technology; and communication.

5) What are counterfeit medicines?

According to the WHO definition, a counterfeit medicine is “a medicine, which is deliberately and fraudulently mislabelled with respect to identity and/or source. Counterfeiting can apply to both branded and generic products and counterfeit products may include products with the correct ingredients or with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients, with insufficient active ingredients or with fake packaging”.