

Department of Health mounts joint operation with Hong Kong Customs against suspected fake Chinese herbal medicine (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) mounted a joint-operation with Hong Kong Customs today (July 5) to raid the premises of Cai Chong Trading Company (Cai Chong), a licensed wholesaler of Chinese herbal medicines (Chm) in Sheung Wan, as the company was suspected selling fake Chm, namely Indigo Naturalis.

During the DH's market surveillance, a sample of a batch of Chm, Indigo Naturalis (batch number: 2017.09.16) was collected from Cai Chong for identification. The test result from the Government Laboratory revealed the above Chm did not conform with the requirements for the identification of Indigo Naturalis as detailed in the Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China 2015 Volume 1. Hence, the sample was suspected not to be Indigo Naturalis.

In the operation, Customs Officers seized a total of 14 boxes of suspected fake Chm and arrested a 46-year-old male manager of the wholesaler. Investigation is ongoing.

The DH endorsed Cai Chong to voluntarily recall from the market the above batch of Chm. Cai Chong has set up a hotline (2559 9534) for public enquiries. So far, no adverse report related to the use of the aforementioned Chm has been received by the DH. The DH will closely monitor the recall.

Indigo Naturalis is a Schedule 2 Chm of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap 549). It is dried powder or mass prepared from the leaf or the stem and leaf of *Baphicacanthus cusia* (Nees) Bremek, *Polygonum tinctorium* Ait or *Isatis indigotica* Fort. It is used to clear heat and remove toxins, cool the blood and resolve macule, as well as to purge fever and settle convulsions.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO), any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure products at reputable shops. Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

The DH urged members of the public who have purchased the above batch of

Chm to stop using it immediately and submit it to the Chinese Medicine Division of the DH on 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal. Members of the public who have taken the above Chm and feel unwell should seek advice from healthcare professionals.

