

DH raids retail shops for suspected illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical product (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) and the Police today (September 20) in a joint operation raided two retail shops in Sheung Shui and Yuen Long for suspected illegal sale and possession of an unregistered pharmaceutical product. Three people were arrested during the operation.

During market surveillance, the DH found that the two retail shops had been selling an unregistered pharmaceutical product (see photo), which was labeled in Japanese as containing dexamethasone, a Part 1 poison under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (PPO) (Cap 138).

"Dexamethasone is a steroidal substance for treating inflammation. Inappropriate or excessive application of steroids could cause skin problems. Products containing dexamethasone are prescription medicines and should be used under the advice of medical practitioners," the DH spokesman said.

A man aged 20 and two women aged 24 and 50 were arrested by the Police for suspected illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poison and unregistered pharmaceutical product in the operation today. The DH's investigation is continuing.

According to the PPO, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be sold legally in the market. Illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products and Part I poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX". The DH strongly urges members of the public not to buy or use unregistered pharmaceutical products as their safety, efficacy and quality are not guaranteed.

Members of the public should not self-medicate without advice from healthcare professionals. People who have purchased the above product should stop using it and consult healthcare professionals if they are in doubt or feeling unwell after use. They may submit the product to the DH's Drug Office at Room 1856, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, during office hours for disposal.

