

Man arrested for illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products, Part 1 poisons and antibiotics (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (June 21) conducted an operation against the suspected illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products, Part 1 poisons and antibiotics. A 45-year-old man was arrested during the operation.

Upon intelligence, a shop in Cheung Sha Wan was found selling various unregistered pharmaceutical products, including pain killers, cough and cold medicines, anti-dizziness and antiemetic drugs, as well as external preparations. All the products did not bear Hong Kong registration numbers for pharmaceutical products, while most of them are labelled in foreign languages (including Japanese, Korean and English).

A preliminary investigation indicated that, among the relevant medicines seized during today's enforcement operation, 13 types of products (see photo) contain Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138) (including ibuprofen, dihydrocodeine, methylephedrine, fluocinolone, triamcinolone acetonide, hydrocortisone, difluprednate, diclofenac, felbinac and hyoscine) and/or antibiotic substances under the Antibiotics Ordinance (Cap. 137) (including bacitracin and neomycin). A 45-year-old man was arrested by the Police for illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products, Part 1 poisons and antibiotics.

The DH's investigation is ongoing.

Ibuprofen is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory pain killer and its side effects include nausea, gastrointestinal discomfort and peptic ulcers. Dihydrocodeine is an opioid analgesic and may cause nausea, vomiting and constipation. Side effects of methylephedrine include tachycardia, anxiety, restlessness and insomnia. Fluocinolone, triamcinolone acetonide, hydrocortisone and difluprednate are steroid substances for treating inflammation. Inappropriate application of steroids could cause skin problems and systemic side effects such as moon face, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, adrenal insufficiency and osteoporosis. Diclofenac and felbinac are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs which could be used topically to relieve pain. Inappropriate use of diclofenac and felbinac may cause erythema and dermatitis. Common side effects of hyoscine include dry mouth, blurred vision and constipation. Inappropriate or excessive use of antibiotics can lead to antibiotic resistance.

Products containing the above ingredients should only be supplied by a pharmacy under the supervision of a registered pharmacist, among which those containing fluocinolone, triamcinolone acetonide, difluprednate, bacitracin

or neomycin also require a doctor's prescription.

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be legally sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products or Part 1 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment. Moreover, according to the Antibiotics Ordinance, the maximum penalty for illegal sale or possession of antibiotics is a fine of \$50,000 and 12 months' imprisonment.

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. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX".

Members of the public should not self-medicate without advice from healthcare professionals. People who have purchased and used the above products should stop using them and consult healthcare professionals if they are in doubt or feeling unwell after use. They may submit the product to the Drug Office of the DH at Room 1801, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, during office hours for disposal.

