

Public urged not to buy or consume oral product containing undeclared controlled ingredients (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (May 11) appealed to the public not to buy or consume an oral product (no English name, see photo) as it was found to contain undeclared controlled drug ingredients.

During the DH's market surveillance, a sample of the product, which comprises a bottle of capsules and a bottle of tablets, was purchased from a licensed pharmacy in Tuen Mun for analysis. Test results from the Government Laboratory revealed that the capsules and tablets contained indomethacin and dexamethasone respectively. Both ingredients are Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138). The product is also suspected to be an unregistered pharmaceutical product.

The DH today conducted an operation against the above pharmacy, during which a 26-year-old man was arrested by the Police for suspected illegal sale of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical product. The DH's investigation is continuing.

Indomethacin is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug used to relieve pain and inflammation. Its side effects include gastrointestinal discomfort, nausea and peptic ulcer. Dexamethasone is a steroid drug used for treating inflammation. Its side effects include moon face, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, muscle atrophy, adrenal insufficiency and osteoporosis. Indomethacin and dexamethasone are prescription medicines which should only be used under the advice of a medical doctor and can only be supplied at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist upon a doctor's prescription.

According to the 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.

Upon completion of its investigation, the DH will seek advice from the Department of Justice on prosecution matters and will also refer the relevant case to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong for consideration of possible disciplinary action. The DH would refer the relevant cases to other enforcement agencies to follow up where necessary.

The DH spokesman strongly urged members of the public not to buy products of unknown or doubtful composition, or to consume products from unknown sources. Members of the public who have purchased the above product should stop consuming it immediately. They should consult healthcare professionals for advice if feeling unwell after consumption.

â€‹The public 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.

