

## Public urged not to buy or consume oral product labelled “Tian Ma Tu Chung Seven Leave Ginseng” (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 29) conducted a joint operation with the Police at a premises in Sai Ying Pun suspected of illegal sale of Part 1 Poison and unregistered pharmaceutical product, and arrested a man aged 66 years for suspected illegal sale of Part 1 poison and unregistered pharmaceutical product. The DH appealed to the public not to buy or consume an oral product labelled "TIAN MA TU CHUNG SEVEN LEAVE GINSENG" as shown in the photo, as it is suspected of containing undeclared controlled drug ingredients.

"The DH received information that a premises of Listed Seller of Poisons (commonly known as medicine store) in Sai Ying Pun was suspected of selling the above product and immediately took follow-up action by purchasing a product sample from the premises concerned for analysis. The laboratory test results revealed that the product sample contained diclofenac, terbinafine and paracetamol. The first two substances are Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138) (PPO), while paracetamol, when contained in pharmaceutical products, is Part 2 poison under the PPO. The product is also suspected of being an unregistered pharmaceutical product," a spokesman for the DH said.

The DH will continue to follow up and investigate the incident.

Diclofenac is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug for pain relieve. Its side effects include gastrointestinal discomfort, nausea and peptic ulcer. Terbinafine is an antifungal drug. Its side effects include nausea, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Products containing diclofenac and terbinafine for oral consumption are prescription medicines that should only be used under a doctor's directions and be supplied in the premises of an Authorized Seller of Poisons (i.e. pharmacy) under the supervision of a registered pharmacist upon a doctor's prescription. On the other hand, paracetamol is for pain relieve and an antipyretic. Overdose can result in severe liver damage. Pharmaceutical products containing paracetamol are Part 2 poisons that should only be supplied in a pharmacy or medicine store.

"According to the Ordinance, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products or Part 1 poisons, and illegal sale of Part 2 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment. Upon completion of the investigation, the DH will seek advice from the Department of Justice on prosecution matters and will also refer the case to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong

for any necessary disciplinary action," the spokesman said.

The DH spokesman strongly urged members of the public not to buy or consume products of doubtful composition or from unknown sources. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX". The safety, quality and efficacy of unregistered pharmaceutical products are not guaranteed.

"People who have purchased the product concerned should stop consuming it immediately and consult healthcare professionals if in doubt or if they feel unwell after consumption. They may submit the product to the Drug Office of the DH at Room 1804-06, 18/F, Wing On Kowloon Centre, 345 Nathan Road, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal," the spokesman said.

