

Online Pharmacies: What You Need to Know to Keep Everyone Safe




Midwest Medication Safety Symposium



Speakers

Marty Allain, JD
 Chair and Board Director of ASOP Global Foundation
 Senior Manager, National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's
 .Pharmacy Verified Websites Program
mallain@nabp.pharmacy



John Hertig, PharmD, MS, CPPS
 Board Director of ASOP Global
 Associate Director at Purdue University College of Pharmacy,
 Center for Medication Safety Advancement
jhertig@purdue.edu



2

Objective

1. Identify verified online pharmacies from unverified sites.
2. Explain methods of patient counseling that promote use of safe online medication sources.
3. List trustworthy sources for patient education related to the risks of unverified online pharmacies.

3

Today's Discussion Agenda

1. Framing the Issue: Illegal Online Pharmacies
2. Understanding Hoosier Perceptions and Behaviors Regarding Online Pharmacies
3. What Professionals Can Do to Keep Patients Safe
4. Concluding Remarks & Next Steps

4

About ASOP Global Foundation


The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP) Global Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to educating consumers about the proliferation of illegal pharmacy websites and counterfeit medicines and how to stay safe online.

<http://ASOPFoundation.pharmacy>

► Affiliated non-profit 501(c)(4) organization: ASOP Global
www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy

5

Cost, Convenience and Access to Care




35,000 – 45,000
online pharmacies

in your pocket


LegitScript 2016

6

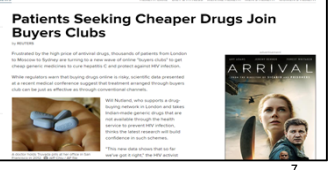
Cost, Convenience and Access to Care



International Business Times
Americans turn to Canada for cheaper Epipens
By Michael J. Reardon
 Americans are turning to Canada for cheaper Epipens, the life-saving medicine used to treat severe allergic reactions of about 5 million Americans.



Daily Mail
US Patients Turn To Online Pharmacies For Cheap Meds. But Drug Companies Say The Sites Endanger Consumers
By Peter Dinklage
 Americans are turning to online pharmacies for cheaper medicines, but drug companies say the sites endanger consumers.



Patients Seeking Cheaper Drugs Join Buyers Clubs
By David S. Mustin
 Frustrated by the high price of generic drugs, thousands of patients from London are turning to online pharmacies to buy generic drugs for a fraction of the cost. They are joining buyers clubs, which are groups of patients who pool their purchasing power to negotiate lower prices with drug manufacturers.

Why Is This A Problem?

Hidden Poisons in Counterfeit Medications

There are a lot of shady ingredients that go into counterfeit medications that consumers can be exposed to by buying directly from unlicensed drug sellers on the internet, or when medical professionals purchase medications from outside the secured supply chain.

Investigators have found these dangerous ingredients in fake medicine.


<p>Heavy metals</p>  <p>mercury aluminum lead cadmium arsenic chromium uranium strontium selenium</p>	<p>Actual poison</p>  <p>PCBs benzopyrenes rat poison boric acid antifreeze</p>	<p>Common household items</p>  <p>road paint wall paint brick dust floor wax sheet rock paint thinner</p>	<p>Drugs you didn't ask for</p>  <p>aminotadalafil homosildenafil xanthoanthrafil pseudovaldenafil hongdenafil sibutramine haloperidol</p>	<p>No drugs at all</p>  <p>dextrose dextrin lactose starch saline salt</p>	 <p>FAKE</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Brick Dust: Used by counterfeiters to provide color and texture to pills, brick dust can contain poisonous heavy metals and other chemicals.

The Partnership for Safe Medicines, 2012

Why Is This A Problem?

- ▶ Every day, approximately 20 new illegal online pharmacy websites go live globally.
- ▶ 3,300 sites sell controlled substances like opioids, often without a prescription.
- ▶ In searching online for prescription opioids across the three major search engines, nearly 91% of the first search results led users to an illegal online drug seller offering prescription opioids.



97% of online drug sellers operate illegally.

The Partnership for Safe Medicines, 2012; LegiScript 2016; NABP 2017

Why Is This A Problem?

- ▶ Common violations by illegal drug sellers include:
 - ▶ Selling **falsified, adulterated and unapproved medicines**;
 - ▶ Selling prescription **medications without a prescription**; and
 - ▶ Operating with **no pharmacy license**.
- ▶ Risks of over/under-dosing, drug interactions, adverse events and financial fraud.
- ▶ Online drug sellers can make between **\$1 – 2.5 million** in sales each month.
- ▶ Counterfeiters make **10x more profit** than that of illicit drug traders.

Blackstone 2017

10

Rogue Internet Pharmacy Operations



Fisher College Criminal Justice Program, 2017

11

Patient Harms



Woman Dies After Taking 'Diet Pills' Bought Over the Internet
The Guardian (April 2015)



Banned Slimming Drug Kills Medical Student: Coroner Attacks Online Dealers who Target the Vulnerable – *Daily Mail (April 2013)*



Paramedic Died After Taking Tablets She Bought Over the Internet to Help Her Sleep – *Daily Mail (May 2011)*


12

Polymakers are Increasingly Concerned

- ▶ January 25, 2018: Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Report
<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations/hearings/combating-the-opioid-crisis-exploiting-vulnerabilities-in-international-mail>
 - ▶ Illegal online drug sellers contribute to the opioid epidemic.
 - ▶ Drugs bought online are often transhipped through other countries (via national post) in an effort to reduce the risk of interdiction by law enforcement.
 - ▶ Estimated revenues from online illicit drug sales increased from between \$15-17 million in 2012 to \$150-\$180 million in 2015.
- ▶ April 4, 2018: U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD called on Internet providers and social media platforms to take proactive measures to help address the illegal advertisement and sale of prescription drugs and illicit narcotics online
<https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Speeches/ucm603651.htm>
- ▶ May 10, 2018: Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Report on Illicit Fentanyl Seizures:
<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Combating%20the%20Opioid%20Epidemic%20-%20Intercepting%20Illicit%20Opioids%20at%20Ports%20of%20Entry%20-%20Final.pdf>
- ▶ Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018 (introduced Senate bill). If passed, would:
 - ▶ Improve detection and seizure of illegal drugs, such as fentanyl, through stronger FDA and Customs and Border Protection coordination.
 - ▶ Clarify US Customs and Border Protection is responsible for destroying controlled substances found in packages at the border, and strengthen FDA's authority to refuse admission of illegal drugs from bad actors.

Spotting a Fake Online Pharmacy

- ▶ Is the online pharmacy in compliance with the laws in *both* the *country of origin* and the *country of destination*?
 - ▶ Approved Medicines.
 - ▶ Licenses in Jurisdictions of Business
- ▶ Does it require a *valid prescription* for prescription medications?
 - ▶ No 'Form-Only' Medical Consultations
 - ▶ No Waivers
 - ▶ Real Doctor-Patient Relationships





Fraudulent use of NABP VIPPS seal

Fake pop-up when seal is clicked to create appearance of legitimacy

What is NABP?

- ▶ The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.
- ▶ Nonprofit, international, impartial professional organization that supports its member boards of pharmacy in protecting the public health.
- ▶ Has been certifying US-based internet pharmacy sites since 1999.
- ▶ Acquired the **".pharmacy" TLD in 2014** to create a safe online environment for internet pharmacy transactions, health products and health information.
- ▶ Public health protection – foundation for all NABP programs and services.

NABP 2017 16

ASOP Global Hoosier Survey

Methodology and Demographics

- ▶ ASOP Global partnered with Baseline, a nationally-recognized polling firm, to conduct a consumer survey over five days in May 2017.
- ▶ Margin of error: (+/-) 4%.
- ▶ 33% online panel; 37% landline phone; 30% mobile phone.
- ▶ 500 interviews (48% male/52% female)
 - ▶ Age distribution, race/ethnicity and partisanship representative of Indiana voters.
 - ▶ Respondent ages reflect national averages.
- ▶ 76% of participants or a member of their household currently taking a prescription medication.

Hertig 2017 17

Key Consumer Behavior Findings

While only 27% of consumers are very familiar with online pharmacies, a majority (55%) has or would consider buying medication online.

Familiarity Level	Percentage
Very Familiar	27%
Somewhat Familiar	38%
Not Familiar	34%
Unsure	1%

Hertig 2017 18

Key Consumer Behavior Findings

- ▶ **1/3** of respondents had purchased from an online pharmacy for themselves or someone under their care.
- ▶ Adults **over the age of 55** were most likely to have purchased from an online pharmacy.
- ▶ **Lower household income** correlates with willingness to **accept higher risks** of online pharmacy use.
- ▶ **72% of daily social media users** would consider purchasing medications online compared to 75% of non-social media users who would not consider using an online pharmacy.

Hertig 2017 19

Key Consumer Behavior Findings

88% of people who **have purchased** prescription drugs online (purchasers) did **not discuss it with their healthcare provider**.

Of *all* respondents, 91% do not discuss where they get their medicines with from a provider.

Category	Percentage
Did Not Discuss	91%
Did Discuss	6%
Unsure	3%

Hertig 2017 20

What Medicines Would Consumers Purchase Online?

- ▶ **42%** have bought or would consider buying **chronic disease medicines** online, such as products for blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- ▶ **21%** have bought or would consider buying **specialty medications** online, such as chemotherapies or hormone replacement therapy.
- ▶ **17%** of consumers have considered buying **chronic pain medications** online (*we didn't ask if they had bought in this category for fear of under self-reporting*).

But less than 5% of consumers are aware of tools available to help them find safe online pharmacies.

Hertig 2017 21

Key Consumer Perception Findings

After learning the facts, **59% of consumers oppose prescription drug importation from Canada.**

- ▶ 53% of consumers **perceived Canadian online pharmacies as risky.**
- ▶ 57% of consumers believe their **privacy and/or identity theft** is at risk.
- ▶ 15% of consumers **would consider using a Canadian online pharmacy** and are willing to accept moderate-to-high risk to do so.

Hertig 2017 22

Top Facts that Impact Consumer Perceptions

- ▶ Many foreign online pharmacies **do not require prescriptions** for medication, making it easier to evade law enforcement and get drugs, **worsening our the US opioid epidemic.**
- ▶ Since 2010 there have been more than **200 felony counts** against networks affiliated with Canadian online pharmacies.
- ▶ While the Canadian government requires Canadian online pharmacies to sell Canadian approved drugs to their own citizen, they **cannot ensure** Americans will receive Canadian medicines. According to the US FDA, **85%** of medicines that are sold to Americans by Canadian online pharmacies **are not Canadian.**

Hertig 2017 23

Top Three Survey Takeaways

- ▶ 55% of Hoosiers have or would buy online, yet less than 5% know how to do so safely.
- ▶ Educated consumers take less risks.
- ▶ More education is needed – to healthcare providers and consumers/employees.

For more survey takeaways, please visit:
<https://goo.gl/pTwwUJ>

24

What Professionals Can Do to Counsel Patients

- ▶ Patients should recognize .Pharmacy as the valid designation for a legitimate pharmacy or related website.
- ▶ Message: *"Look to the right of the dot".*
- ▶ Increased public awareness will decrease the impact of rogue online drug sellers masquerading as pharmacies.
- ▶ As consumer recognition increases, .Pharmacy will be the desired website domain for consumers & legitimate pharmacy businesses.

25

What To Remember

If Buying Online: How to Save Money and Stay Safe

- ▶ **BuySafeRx.pharmacy** to verify before buying online and for links to drug discount resources.
- ▶ **RefillWise.pharmacy** is a free-to-use drug discount savings card that offers users an average of 40% savings on prescriptions when presenting the card at their brick-and-mortar pharmacy.
- ▶ **BlinkHealth.pharmacy** negotiates with pharmacies to determine one low price for each medication; accepted at over 57,000 pharmacies nationwide
- ▶ **GoodRx.pharmacy** collects and compares prices for every FDA-approved drug at over 70,000 pharmacies nationwide; offers 100% free service including coupons for many pharmacies.
- ▶ **NeedyMeds.org** steers people to assistance programs to help them afford their medications and other healthcare costs.
- ▶ Check out **manufacturers' websites** for coupons to use in local pharmacies!

26

Final Takeaways

- Visit www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy to verify before buying medicine online.
 - Provider toolkit available (or you can create a customized version using readily downloadable materials)
- Trust websites **ending in the ".pharmacy"** (dot-pharmacy) domain.



- For the latest news, sign-up for the ASOP Global Foundation newsletter on our website www.ASOPfoundation.pharmacy

NABP 2017

27

Develop Your Own Toolkits to Educate

Go to the following website and download infographics, fact sheets, and brochures at no charge:

- <https://buysafefx.pharmacy/for-the-media/infographics/>
- <https://buysafefx.pharmacy/for-the-media/fact-sheets/>
- <https://buysafefx.pharmacy/asop-global-brochures/>



28

Three Options to Make Your Own Toolkits

1. Download whatever you like from ASOP website at no charge and print documents yourself.

-This option has ASOP branding noted on all education material.

2. If you wish to **co-brand** with ASOP, to include your organization name and/or logo, you will need to complete an ASOP licensing agreement which is offered at no charge. If interested, contact Matt Rubin at matthew.rubin@FaegreBD.com

3. If you wish to would like to order toolkits from ASOP and pay for printing/ mailing costs, contact Matt Rubin at matthew.rubin@FaegreBD.com

29

References

- Blackstone, Erin A., PhD, Joseph P. Fuhr, Jr., PhD, Steve Pociask, MA, The Health and Economic Effects of Counterfeit Drugs, *Am Health Drug Benefits*, 2014; 7(4): 216-224, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4105729/pdf/hdb-07-216.pdf>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- Fisher College Criminal Justice Program, *Online Opioids: Report Concerning Ease of Access, Highlighting Potential Solutions Using Existing Laws and Technology*, May 2015, <http://bit.ly/0m750X>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- Herlig, John, PharmD, MS, Chelsea Anderson, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, Catherine Scott, CPHQ, Kathryn Marwitz PharmD, MPH, Kersten Walters PharmD, Jackie Wasynczak PharmD, Evaluation of Risk Perception Associated with Online Pharmacy Use, August 2017, <http://buysafefx.pharmacy/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/EVALUATION-OF-RISK-PERCEPTION-ASSOCIATED-WITH-ONLINE-PHARMACY-USE-STUDY.pdf>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- Herlig, John B., PharmD, MS and Nikki Sebahar, PharmD Candidate, Evaluation of Pharmacists' Awareness of the Prevalence and Negative Consequences Associated with Illegal Internet Pharmacies, May 2017, http://buysafefx.pharmacy/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CMSA_whitepaper_phonlinelegitimacy.pdf. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- LegiScript, The Internet Pharmacy Market in 2016, January 2016, <http://www.safemedicine.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Internet-Pharmacy-Market-in-2016.pdf>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- Mosley, Tim K., Bryan A. Liang, Peter York, and Thomas Kubic, Counterfeit Drug Penetration into Global Legitimate Medicine Supply Chains: A Global Assessment, *Am. J. Trop. Med. Hyg.* 92 (Suppl 6), 2015, pp. 59-67, <http://buysafefx.pharmacy/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Counterfeit-Drug-Penetration-into-Global-Legitimate-Medicine-Supply-Chains-2015-2.pdf>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, Internet Drug Outlet Identification Program
- Progress Report for State and Federal Regulators, March 2017, https://nabp.pharmacy/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/NABP-Internet-Drug-Outlet-Report_March-2017.pdf. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, *Buying Medicines Online—What are the Risks?* <https://nabp.pharmacy/relatives/dot-pharmacy/buying-medicine-online/>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- The Partnership for Safe Medicines, *SAFE MEDICINES Teaches You 5 Kinds of Poisons Found in Counterfeit Medicines*, March 2012, <http://www.safemedicine.org/2012/03/no-drugs-at-all.html>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *BeSafeRx: Know Your Online Pharmacy*, <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/BuyingMedicinesOvertheInternet/BeSafeRxKnowYourOnlinePharmacy/default.htm>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Internet Pharmacies: Federal Agencies and States Face Challenges Combating Rogue Sites, Particularly Those Abroad*, GAO-13-560, July 2013, <http://buysafefx.pharmacy/wp-content/uploads/2017/00/gao-report.pdf>. Accessed September 24, 2017.
- World Health Organization, *SSFFC Medical Products – The Internet*, http://www.who.int/medicines/regulation/saffc/med_prod_internet/en/. Accessed September 24, 2017.

Thank You! Questions?

Marty Allain, JD

Chair and Board Director of ASOP Global Foundation
Senior Manager, National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's
.Pharmacy Verified Websites Program
mallain@nabp.pharmacy



John Hertig, PharmD, MS, CPPS

Board Director of ASOP Global
Associate Director at Purdue University College of Pharmacy,
Center for Medication Safety Advancement
jhertig@purdue.edu



31
