Fake Medicines and Malaria

MALARIA IS A DISEASE THAT CAN BE PREVENTED AND TREATED... WHEN USING THE RIGHT MEDICINES

- Genuine malaria medicines make a difference between life and death.
- WHO recommends treatment with quality-assured artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs).
- Genuine ACTs are rapidly and reliably effective, curing more than 90% of malaria cases.
- 50 countries are on track to reduce their malaria cases by 75% by 2015.

The strides achieved so far have in large part rested on improving access to effective treatment for correctly diagnosed cases, long lasting insecticidal nets for prevention and raising awareness among communities.

Let’s keep fake medicines from undermining these efforts!

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OF ANTIMALARIALS IN AFRICA ARE FAKE

In sub-Saharan Africa - where the burden of malaria is the greatest - the prevalence of fake medicines can be even higher.

- In Ghana and Cameroon: up to 40% are fake
- In Nigeria: up to 64% are fake

CASE STUDIES

- In 2005, a 23 year old man died in Eastern Myanmar from cerebral malaria after being given fake medicine, bought in good faith by his local hospital. When the village committee discovered the cause of this needless death, they were sufficiently angry to collect all packs of these fake antimalarials they could find in local shops and burnt them in front of the whole village.

- In 2009, Nigeria intercepted a consignment of nearly 700,000 doses of fake antimalarials. This quantity of fake medicines, if not intercepted, would have been sufficient to give ineffective or dangerous "medications" to hundreds of thousands of pregnant women and children.

- In 2012, in Angola, 1.4 million packets of fake malaria medicines were found in a container from China, hidden inside a shipment of loudspeakers. The fake pills contained no active ingredient. Instead, they were made of calcium phosphates, fatty acids and yellow pigment. The fakes — enough to treat more than half the country’s annual malaria cases, had they been genuine — are part of a proliferation of bogus malaria drugs in Africa that threaten to undermine years of progress in tackling the disease. A large international investigation is now underway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Always buy WHO prequalified antimalarial medicines from a reputable source where medicines are stored properly.
- Always check the packaging carefully:
  - Check the expiry date and if the dosage is correct.
  - Check if the patient information leaflet is in the correct language.
- Closely examine the appearance of your medicines:
  - Check if the pills are cracked or chipped.
- Make sure you have a malaria diagnostic test before taking an antimalarial.
- All antimalarial doses must be taken within three days to be effective.
- Recovery should be rapid and complete by day three of treatment if the antimalarial medicine is genuine.
- Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if you have unusual side-effects after taking your medicines.
- If you have any concerns about the quality of your medicines, and/or if you notice an anomaly on the packaging, instructions, blister pack, or pills, contact your health authority or the medicine manufacturer and retain packaging and any tablets for testing.

FAKE ANTIMALARIALS

- It has been estimated that fake antimalarial medicines contribute to nearly 450,000 preventable deaths every year.
- Fake antimalarial medicines kill hundreds of children every day.
- Every 5 minutes a child dies of malaria because of taking fake medicines.

2. See id.
7. See id.
8. See supra note 6.
9. See supra note 11.
10. See supra note 4.
12. See supra note 4.
13. See supra note 6.
15. See supra note 11.
17. See supra note 6.
18. See supra note 4.
19. See supra note 6.
20. See supra note 4.