



Fight the Fakes Alliance: Official statement to COVID-19 and falsified medical products

The Fight the Fakes Alliance is deeply concerned by the significant threat that the current COVID-19 pandemic poses to global health progress. It is not yet clear how this crisis will impact our society in the long term, but other more immediate consequences are already visible. Medicines and vaccines shortages related to the coronavirus outbreak have resulted in patients taking matters into their own hands to treat and protect themselves. This creates the perfect environment for criminals to profit from this situation, exploiting the general feeling of fear, insecurity and “vaccine-related anxiety”.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a global [surge in reported falsified medical products](#) including protective equipment, such as surgical masks, hand sanitizers, gloves, and diagnostic tests. More recently – and even more worryingly – fake treatments, “cures” and vaccines have widely been reported for sale..

The Fight the Fakes Alliance is calling on the global health community to raise awareness about the dangers of falsified medical products promising to treat, protect from or cure COVID-19.

In early December the first COVID-19 vaccines received emergency regulatory approval in several countries. In response, [Interpol](#) has issued a global alert to law enforcement across the world warning them to prepare for organized crime networks targeting COVID-19 vaccines, both physically and online. Since the warning there have been increasing reports of fake vaccines being offered and sold, both physically and online, targeting the general public but also [governments](#) and health bodies. Law enforcement is working to prevent and crack down crimes related to falsified vaccines and falsified medical products for COVID-19. On 3 March, Interpol [announced](#) that it has dismantled a network of fake COVID-19 vaccines in South Africa and China, adding that this operation is just a fraction of the COVID-19 related criminality.

The Fight the Fakes Alliance and its members would like to stress that falsified versions of such vaccines are being advertised on the dark web, on unauthorised online websites, through deceitful ads and emails from fraudulent impersonations, and even [on the streets](#). With approved diagnostics, treatments and vaccines for COVID-19 it is now more imperative than ever to sensitize communities everywhere about the importance of strictly relying only on the legitimate supply chain of medicines and vaccines (i.e. hospitals, clinics, pharmacies). Manufacturers, distributors, governments, healthcare professionals and all those involved in delivering COVID-19 vaccines to the population are working together to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are safely procured, stored, distributed and administered. Processes that allow securing and closely monitoring the chain of distribution of COVID-19 vaccines are being put into place by all stakeholders involved, to ensure every vaccine administered through the legitimate supply chain is genuinely of high quality, safe



and efficacious. The implementation of global standards for identification, barcoding and data exchange is one of those important processes to help ensure a safe distribution and administration.

Buying COVID-19 medical products from unknown, unauthorized online sellers or online pharmacies bears an extremely high risk of purchasing substandard and falsified products. Using medical products that have not been approved for COVID-19 without medical supervision pose a significant risk to patient's well-being and safety.

We are not only fighting a virus, but also an *infodemic*.

When informing yourself, make sure that the source of information is legitimate and be aware of any misleading and deliberately fake information on COVID-19 circulating online. As it has been described by the WHO, this *infodemic* may lead to putting your health and the health of people around you at risk.

For further advice and the most recent information, please visit WHO's [website](#).