



Embargoed until 2 December 2019 (7:00 CET)

Efforts to combat the spread of substandard and falsified medicines must be stepped up

- Falsified medicines are a growing global issue which can affect everyone and everywhere. Among the most frequently reported counterfeit medicines are antibiotics and antimalarials. Criminals are also faking treatments for diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, tuberculosis and HIV as well as steroids and painkillers.
- Between 2 to 8 December *'Be Aware, Speak Up, Fight the Fakes'* will be slogan of an *awareness raising campaign for the general public*, but also targeting doctors, nurses, researchers, wholesalers, pharmaceutical executives, medical and pharmacy students, through the network of the campaign members.
- The Fight the Fakes campaign wants people to share on social media information on the dangers of poor-quality and falsified medicines. In 2020, Fight the Fakes will bring this message to governments and international organisations to rally as much support as possible for this under-recognized global health threat!

Geneva, 2 December 2019 – *'Be Aware, Speak Up, Fight the Fakes'* is this year's *Fight the Fakes Week* slogan, aiming at rallying organizations and individuals around the world to spread the word about the dangers of substandard and falsified medicines and take action. Throughout the week, the 37 members behind the campaign are raising awareness throughout their organizations and in so doing are potentially to reach over 3 million doctors, nurses, researchers, wholesalers, pharmaceutical executives, medical and pharmacy students, and many more.

Falsified drugs are a growing global issue which can affect everyone and everywhere. Among the most frequently reported falsified medical products are antibiotics and antimalarials. Over 250,000 children die each year as a result of being given falsified malaria and tuberculosis medicines alone. Given the staggering number of falsified antibiotics and other counterfeit medical products, this number will be much higher in reality.^[1] Worryingly, fake medicines for other life-threatening illnesses are entering the supply chain and reaching patients, such as treatments for diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, tuberculosis and HIV. The problem is most acute in low- and middle-income countries with estimations suggesting that 1 in 10 medical products are either substandard or falsified.^[2]

The implications of falsified and poor-quality medicines do not only pose a threat to patients, with sometimes tragic consequences, they contribute to the development antimicrobial resistance, fuel mistrust in health care professionals and health care systems, and ultimately hinder countries socio-economic development. What can you do to fight the fakes? Engage with the [Fight the Fakes](#) campaign on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#), download various resources from our [website](#), and educate your family, friends, and community about the dangers of poor-quality and falsified medicines!

One of the main goals of the global health community - achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030 - requires access to safe, effective and high-quality medicines. While the [UN Political Declaration on UHC](#), which was endorsed by all 193 member states in September, calls for increased awareness raising of the risk of falsified medicines, this is simply not enough. *Fight the Fakes Week* aims to rally all organisations and individuals working in the area of public health and patient safety or everyone who is interested in the issue of falsified medicines to speak up and call for greater coordinated action to tackle this growing global health threat.

We want to see greater efforts and concrete action from the World Health Organization, regional agencies and national governments to curb the manufacturing and distribution of falsified medicines. Strong national legislative frameworks which prohibit the manufacturing and sale of falsified medical products, and subsequently rigid law enforcement need

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2019/mar/11/fake-drugs-kill-more-than-250000-children-a-year-doctors-warn>

[2] <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/28-11-2017-1-in-10-medical-products-in-developing-countries-is-substandard-or-falsified>



SPEAK UP ABOUT FAKE MEDICINES

to be put in place. Further, the implementation of robust and effective drug regulatory systems which prevent falsified medicines from reaching patients has to be prioritized. For the goal of UHC by 2030 to remain tangible, coordinated action by all relevant stakeholders will be critical. In 2020, Fight the Fakes will bring this message to governments and international organisations to rally as much support as possible for this under-recognized global health threat!

Further information for this year's *Fight the Fakes Week* can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions, please reach out the Fight the Fakes Secretariat at secretariat@fightthefakes.org.

About the campaign:

[Fight the Fakes](#) is a campaign that aims to raise awareness about the dangers of fake medicines. The campaign gives a voice to those who have been personally impacted and shares the stories of those working to put a stop to this threat to public health. It seeks to build a global movement of organizations and individuals who will shine light on the negative impact that falsified and substandard medicines have on people around the globe and to reduce the negative consequences on individuals worldwide. *Fight the Fakes* partners endorse the campaign and share the belief that coordination among all stakeholders involved in the manufacturing and distribution of medicines is vital to tackle this public health threat. Do you want to join the fight and lend your support to the campaign? Are you interested in becoming a partner? Do you have a story to tell? Contact us at secretariat@fightthefakes.org.