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Note for the Editors

The European Pharmacopoeia and the EDQM (a Directorate of the Council of Europe notably in charge of the secretariat of the European Pharmacopoeia) have a mission to protect and promote public and animal health, through the elaboration of quality standards of medicines for human and veterinary use.

Medicines need to be safe, effective and of good quality in order to produce the expected therapeutic effect. The EDQM works closely with its international and European partners to strengthen measures in order to ensure that substandard or counterfeit medicines do not reach the marketplace.

The EDQM's networks collaborate on a daily basis with all the authorities involved in the standardisation, regulation and control of medicines for human and veterinary use. Since December 2006, the EDQM took over activities of the Council of Europe in the domains of blood transfusion and organ transplantation.

COMBINING FORCES TO PROTECT PATIENTS FROM COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES AND PHARMACEUTICAL CRIME: A MODEL FOR A NETWORK AND SINGLE POINTS OF CONTACT (SPOCS) ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND BORDERS

Counterfeiting of medical products and other related pharmaceutical crimes put public health in danger in Europe and worldwide.

Rapid and effective communication and concerted co-operation amongst officials in a country and across national borders are a pre-requisite to contain and prevent harm to patient's health, disrupt supply of suspect counterfeit medical products, prosecute and deter criminals, and to avoid damage to healthcare systems.

Often, communication and co-operation are hampered by the lack of adequate structures and procedures for concerned health and law enforcement.

The conclusions of the Council of Europe [2005](#) and [2006 international conferences](#) on counterfeit medicines ([link¹](#)) called for the establishment of a network of dedicated contact persons (SPOCs) within authorities involved in combating counterfeit medicines and other forms of pharmaceutical crimes.

Inspired by the above conclusions, the Council of Europe Ad hoc Group on Counterfeit Medicines developed a model for a network and SPOCs and adopted it in June 2007. This model establishes a network of entities responsible for the management of notifications of medical products suspect of being counterfeit or of other pharmaceutical crimes. The entities involved comprise drug regulatory authorities including the official medicines control laboratories, customs, police and justice authorities. The importance of co-operation with industry, health professionals and other stakeholders is recognised.

The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and HealthCare (EDQM) is pleased that the 2nd General Meeting of the WHO International Medical Products Anti-counterfeiting Taskforce (IMPACT), Lisbon, 12-13 December 2007, endorsed the model for a network of single points of contact (SPOCs) enhancing its outreach and applicability to a global level. The EDQM, assisted by its Network of Official Medicines Control Laboratories (OMCL Network), has a worldwide reputation in standard setting and surveillance programmes for pharmaceuticals and contributes significantly to the Council of Europe programme of activities targeted at combating counterfeit medical products.

EDQM is supporting its expert bodies entrusted with a programme of activities dealing *inter alia* with public health oriented multi-sectorial prevention and risk management strategies to fight counterfeit medicines and pharmaceutical crimes, including the development of and training on best practices and the support to the elaboration and implementation of relevant national legislation and international legal instruments.

Responding to the situation in Europe and keeping pace with criminal inventiveness require multisector and multi-organisation counterstrategies: the EDQM will contribute through its programme of activities to improving networking and co-operation in member states through *inter alia* a network of SPOCs.

The network will serve your interest in safe and genuine medicines – your observations of suspect medical products are important: Communicate them to your doctor or pharmacist or the national drug regulatory authorities.



A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.

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Link to EDQM website for more information: http://www.edqm.eu/site/News_and_General_Information-44.html
2006 International Conference: http://www.coe.int/t/e/social_cohesion/soc-sp/public_health/pharma_and_medicine/Presentation_Conference_Moscow%20CountMed%20public.asp#TopOfPage
2005 Seminar: http://www.coe.int/t/e/social_cohesion/soc-sp/public_health/pharma_and_medicine/Presentation_Seminar_CountMed%20public.asp#TopOfPage