



## Mission statement

The European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines is an independent voice campaigning to stop the supply of counterfeit and substandard medicines to better ensure patient safety.

## Objectives

To increase awareness of the dangers of counterfeit and substandard medicines, to successfully campaign for improved legislation, enforcement and patients' rights to safe medicines.

## Strategies

- Be the recognised independent, inter-sectoral voice representing European patients' rights to access safe medicines.
- Raise public awareness of the dangers of counterfeit and substandard medicines, based on one key consideration – patient safety.
- Build a network of 'influencers of change' charged with promoting the establishment of a secure supply chain, driving legislative change where necessary.
- Be proactive in devising and implementing safe medicines initiatives and tactics.

## Counterfeit medicines – an increasing threat to patient safety

In recent years there has been a rapid increase in European counterfeiting incidents. Between 2001 and 2005, 27 cases of counterfeit medicines were found in the European supply chain, as reported by the EU Medicines Enforcement Officers Survey.

While there have been consistent efforts to raise awareness and drive change to secure the supply chain, it is clear that counterfeit medicines continue to appear, which holds serious implications for patient safety.

Counterfeit medicines are not the only risk to patient safety, the phenomenon of 'parallel trade' has also led to repackaging errors, shortcomings in patient information, and the negation of track and trace technologies.

Public awareness of the issues surrounding counterfeit and substandard medicines is currently extremely low, and in particular the dangers of buying prescription medicines online.

## Organisational structure

The direction and actions of the Alliance will be governed by a steering group. The steering group will contain partners from both independent (non-funding) and industry (funding) backgrounds. The steering group will never have more funding partners than non-funding partners. The actions of the group will be carried out by its members, with logistical and marketing support from a professional marketing communications agency.

## Background

The European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines is a new, pan-European patient safety initiative, campaigning for the exclusion of counterfeit and substandard medicines from the supply chain. The Alliance aims to represent all interested parties – patient groups, health professionals, academics, non-governmental organisations, the pharmaceutical industry and policy-makers. Raising public awareness of the issues and addressing the shortcomings of current legislation and enforcement will form a key part of the Alliance's activities.

## WHO definition of counterfeit and substandard medicines

Counterfeit medicines are part of the broader phenomenon of substandard pharmaceuticals. The difference is that they are deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source. Counterfeiting can apply to both branded and generic products and counterfeit medicines may include products with the correct ingredients but fake packaging, with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients or with insufficient active ingredients.

Substandard medicines are products whose composition and ingredients do not meet the correct scientific specifications and which are consequently ineffective and often dangerous to the patient. Substandard products may occur as a result of negligence, human error, insufficient human and financial resources or counterfeiting.

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([www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/2003/fs275/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/2003/fs275/en/))