

NEWS RELEASE

Counterfeit pharmaceutical drugs put Canadian patients at risk

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Counterfeit pharmaceutical drugs pose a real risk to Canadians because they are showing up in brick-and-mortar pharmacies, not just on the street and online, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Pharmaceutical counterfeiting is a growing problem around the world, including Canada—no medicine is immune, and the consequences can be deadly,” said Kristina Acri, Fraser Institute senior fellow, associate professor of economics at Colorado College and author of *Pharmaceutical Counterfeiting: Endangering Public Health, Society, and the Economy*.

The study estimates that the counterfeit pharmaceutical trade could be worth up to \$89 million a year in Canada alone. Globally, it’s valued at approximately \$200 billion annually.

And every type of drug can be counterfeit: name brand drugs, generic drugs, over-the-counter drugs and even herbal remedies. These counterfeit medicines may contain no active ingredient, harmful ingredients, the wrong drug, the wrong concentration, the wrong dose or drugs past their expiry dates.

Poorly regulated or illegal Internet pharmacies and criminal organizations account for many of the counterfeit drugs on the market, but there have also been cases—albeit rare—when brick-and-mortar pharmacies have dispensed counterfeit drugs by mistake as well.

“Canadians must be aware of the risks of counterfeit pharmaceuticals when purchasing prescription drugs from any venue,” Acri said.

“To curb the proliferation of counterfeit drugs, Canadian policymakers could stiffen penalties for offenders and pursue international treaties with other developed countries targeting the counterfeit trade.”

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