

Police, Customs and Drug-Control Authorities Hunt Counterfeit Drugs

GPHF trained inspectors in Vietnam / Training courses organised in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

Drugs without any agents whatsoever, perfect copies of packaging, deliberately extended minimum shelf lives – just as in many other Southeast-Asian countries, counterfeit drugs constitute a serious health problem in Vietnam, too. According to estimates of the World Health Organisation, up to eight per cent of all medicines sold in Vietnam are counterfeited products. Although the authorities do not officially confirm these figures, they are well aware of the problem. In October and November, 50 employees of the drug-control authorities, the police and customs were trained on the use of the GPHF-Minilab®. The deployment of this unique, mobile, compact laboratory allows quick detection of whether a drug is counterfeited or of substandard quality



With great commitment participants of a training course learn the test methods of the Minilab

"Detection and Investigation of Counterfeit Medicines", this was the title of the one-week training courses held by pharmacist Dr Richard Jähnke in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon. The GPHF project manager - who can look back on countless trips to Asia and Africa with the Minilab and its convincing methodology – was very pleased about the commitment his Vietnamese students showed: "I was impressed by their quick grasp of the subject as well as their pharmaceutical

and foreign-languages knowledge. In combination with the Minilab now deployed in Vietnam, the participants of both courses are the guarantee that counterfeiters will have a tough time in Vietnam from now on."

At a Glance

Drug Counterfeits	Page 2
Symposium in Berlin	Page 3
Symposium of the VfA on HIV	Page 4

Gaps in the Control System

Almost 1,000 miles separate the two training venues in Hanoi in the north and Ho Chi Minh City located in the south of the country. At the same time, this distance is symbolic of one of the biggest challenges confronting the Vietnamese authorities in their fight against drug counterfeiters: the extremely long

GPHF co-ordinates drug donations for victims of the floods in South Asia

The research-based pharmaceutical companies in Germany have reacted swiftly and - way beyond their generous money donations - have made a considerable amount of drug donations available to the victims of the floods in southern Asia.

Since the beginning of the year the GPHF has, in line with the WHO Drug Donation Guidelines, been co-ordinating incoming inquiries of relief organisations and private initiatives as well as offers of donations by pharmaceutical companies to e.g. the German Red Cross. Among these were vaccines against tetanus and cholera, antibiotics, painkillers, gastrointestinal medications and infusion solutions.

Donators include Bayer, Berlin-Chemie, Chiron Vaccines, Eisai, Krewel Meuselbach, MSD Sharp & Dohme. The GPHF thanks all donors and - in view of a long-term support of those affected in the region - appeals to companies for more drug donations. Contact: info@gphf.org

Vietnam at a Glance:

Name:	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Climate:	Tropical/subtropical
Size:	326,797 square kilometres
Capital:	Hanoi, 3.5 million inhabitants
Population:	81.4 million inhabitants – subdivided into 54 ethnic groups
Language:	Vietnamese
Religion:	A majority of Buddhists (70%)
Form of government:	One-party system
Parliament:	Consisting of one chamber
Party in power:	Vietnam Communist Party
Opposition:	None
Administrative structure:	65 districts
Gross domestic product:	32.3 billion Euro
Per capita GDP:	Roughly 400 Euro

Source: German Foreign Office

marily on wholesale marketplaces and in approximately 8,000 outlets. In addition, the sea ports and the customs checkpoints will be included in these monitoring activities. Here, samples of suspicious merchandise will be tested using the Minilab, and will subsequently be forwarded to the central test laboratories.

The necessity of such monitoring activities in Vietnam is plainly illustrated by a case detected in 2003. In this case, Ranitidin (a antiacidic drug used i.a. for treating gastric ulcers) appeared in a sales outlet. The declaration of contents, the shelf life, the packaging and the license number indicating "Australia" as the origin of the product had been counterfeited. This product was a flawless copy of a very sophisticated tropics-compatible packaging (all-aluminium blister) which is to date manufactured only by a very few specialised companies. And the Vietnamese



The absence of structures in many developing countries hinders a well-regulated supply of drugs to the population

borders with China, Laos and Cambodia, all of which are countries where drug counterfeiting is very common. And there is an additional challenge: the coastline of the South-China Sea with its numerous estuaries is difficult to control, too.

And from a structural point of view, Vietnam's readiness to defend its market against counterfeit drugs is quite limited. While the central test laboratories of the drug-control authorities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City together with their branch offices employ a staff of 800, efficient monitoring of the drug market is far from guaranteed.

This is all the more challenging as the sale of drugs in Vietnam in most cases is not effected in pharmacies. Instead, the distribution of the approximately 11,000 ho-mologated drugs manufactured by Vietnamese and international companies is primarily carried out by private dealers generating a turnover of roughly 450 million USD a year.

Minilab now Implemented in Ports

From now on, the Minilab will change this situation. More employees of the drug-control authority, who will also be requested on a case-to-case basis by police and customs authorities, will in future ensure the monitoring of drugs distributed pri-

public, too, seems to be becoming increasingly aware of the problem of counterfeit drugs, an awareness heightened by public-sector television coverage of the two GPHF-Minilab® training courses.

Drug Counterfeits I:

Co-operation between the Federal Ministry of Health and the WHO

The Federal Ministry of Health has announced that it will cooperate closely with the World Health Organisation in the fight against drug counterfeits. One of the objectives is the joint elaboration of an international convention to combat counterfeited drugs.

Drug Counterfeits II:

The GPHF-Minilab® Project at a Glance

"Counterfeit Medicines and the GPHF-Minilab for Rapid Drug-Quality Verification" is the title of an abstract published in the October edition of "The Pharmaceutical Industry (PharmInd)" magazine. It summarises the experience gathered by the GPHF in the use of the mobile compact laboratory in its fight against counterfeit drugs during the past few years. A printout of this article is available free of charge from the GPHF office.

Drugs alone are not Sufficient

Symposium on perspectives for public health in developing countries held in Berlin

An improved medical infrastructure is the prerequisite for improving public health in developing countries. Without the proper infrastructure, even well-intended initiatives such as subsidised drugs have a hard job reaching the target groups. But now there are some encouraging examples for partnerships between public-sector institutions and private companies – the so-called public-private partnerships – that are making valuable contributions to public health. This development was illustrated by international experts on the occasion of the symposium entitled "Public Health and Medical Supply in Developing Countries" held jointly by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA) and the Verband Forschender Arzneimittelhersteller (VFA, Association of Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies) in November in Berlin.

By developing 22 innovative drugs for treating HIV infections in only 20 years, the research-based pharmaceutical companies have made enormous and successful efforts, emphasised Dr Harvey Bale, General Manager of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA). The companies have provided developing countries with these and many other drugs on very advantageous terms. To this end, they have been co-operating in the "Accelerating Access Initiative" with the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNAIDS, and many more institutions. In addition, several manufacturers have initiated relief programmes of their own.

Medical Staff Scarce

However, an adequate number of physicians and hospitals, basic knowledge on prevention, diagnosis and therapy of diseases, and appropriate structures suited for a well-organised supply and distribution of drugs are indispensable prerequisites for satisfying at least the most basic needs of patients suffering from AIDS or other diseases. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are scarcely 600,000 medical professionals available, whereas the number required is 2.5 million. And many of these professionals are constantly migrating to other continents. In addition, most African countries spend less than 20 USD a year on each citizen's health.

For this reason, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW, a German promotional bank), is funding public-health infrastructure and investment in equipment, explained Dr Wolfgang Bichmann, Director of the Health Division of KfW Entwicklungsbank, the Kreditanstalt's department responsible for the Federal Government's initiatives for funding projects in developing countries. In this connection, the Bank not only promotes innovative logistics structures but also the set-up of voucher and insurance systems in order to facilitate access to health-care services for the poorer section of the population.

Releasing Financial Resources

The World Health Organisation's vision on the long-term improvement of health-care services in developing countries was

presented by Dr Jack C. Chow. As assistant director general of the WHO, he co-ordinates the WHO's worldwide activities in the fight against HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and malaria. Dr Chow explained that a well-functioning public health-care system needed four basic elements:

1. Drawing up comprehensive strategies for improving public health;
2. Informing and motivating the population with a view to a more health-conscious behaviour, and reinforcing the civil society responsible for the health-care system;
3. Changing the political climate in all countries such that health-care services are seen as a high priority; and
4. Releasing financial resources in order to promote and to co-ordinate all these efforts.

Building on these foundations, the WHO is promoting concerted actions by co-operating with developing and donor countries, partner organisations such as UNAIDS and the World Bank, and various research institutions, as well as with non-government organisations (NGOs) and institutions from the private sector. The long-term improvement of public health-care services using the financial resources available requires the reinforcement of an unbroken chain of organisations co-operating in a concerted manner.

Commitment of the Pharmaceutical Industry

The commitment of research-based pharmaceutical manufacturers in co-operating with various partners was explained by Dr Christopher P. Murray, Director Pharmaceuticals Division of F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. He said that numerous companies had made the sad discovery that their programmes for supplying drugs to developing countries on advantageous terms or even free of charge have in the past reached only few of the patients urgently needing them. For this reason, such programmes were increasingly complemented by training programmes for medical staff and/or for medical institutions.

Matthias Kleinert, the representative of the Chairman of the "Südliches Afrika Initiative der Deutschen Wirtschaft" (SAFRI, South-Africa Initiative of the German Economic Community), Professor Jürgen E. Schrempp, and counsellor to DaimlerChrysler AG, illustrated how companies could fulfil their social responsibility even and especially in developing countries. In 2000 the company he works for started a HIV/AIDS job programme for its staff and their families in South Africa covering approximately 30,000 persons. This programme includes information campaigns, prevention measures, voluntary tests and the supply of anti-retroviral drugs, as well as complementary health-care activities.

Three years after the start of this programme, which was developed and implemented jointly with Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ, German Service Enterprise for Development Co-operation), the results of the programme became obvious: approximately 75 per cent of the staff have taken a voluntary HIV test. The survival rate of the persons concerned increased to 90 per cent during the first three years, a level which is normally achieved only in Europe and North America.

Infrastructure is Decisive

Cornelia Yzer, Managing Director of the Verband Forschender Arzneimittelhersteller (VFA), emphasised that private-sector companies were willing to make, and were already making, their contribution to public health worldwide. Such programmes required large sums of money which had to be earned in the industrialised nations. But money made available for health-care services was only of use if the appropriate structures were in place and if sufficient knowledge was available locally.

Symposium of the VFA on HIV / AIDS in Developing Countries

On the occasion of the World Aids Day, the Verband Forschender Arzneimittelhersteller e.V. (VFA, Association of Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies) organised a joint symposium with Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (GTZ) and the German Drug-Donation Organisation action medeor. At this symposium, held on November 30 in Berlin, international experts analysed the current situation in the developing countries and the challenges brought about by the fight against the HIV / Aids pandemic.

Representatives of the World Health Organisation and of the Global Funds for Fighting against HIV / Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria explained that a considerable increase in the number of persons treated had been achieved in many countries, and that the medical infrastructure had been substantially improved in recent years. On behalf of the research-based pharmaceutical manufacturers, a representative illustrated that numerous innovative developments promised improved therapy, while a treatment promising the definite cure of the disease was still not in sight.

Drug Counterfeits III:

High-Tech Technology for Fighting against Counterfeits

The pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers Squibb has developed a new method for protecting its drugs against counterfeiting: a special process in which a synthetic counterfeit-proof DNA label is applied to the packaging.

Bayer Makes Donation to the WHO

The Bayer HealthCare AG has signed an agreement on a Lam-pit® donation to the World Health Organisation aimed at fighting the Chagas disease. This donation to the WHO included 250,000 tablets. A further 250,000 tablets will be directly provided by Bayer free of charge in Latin-America where this disease is wide-spread.

Developing Policy Manual

The new edition of the media manual entitled "Entwicklungspolitik 2004/05", containing detailed information on development co-operation, its players, the various fields of activity, the regions and countries complete with facts and data, diagrams and a comprehensive address directory can be requested from the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development free of charge (poststelle@bmz.bund.de).

Apart from the significance of the access to drugs, the experts stressed that continuing insufficiencies in medical infrastructure and the lack of well-trained medical professionals constituted the main obstacles in fighting HIV / Aids.

Imprint:

Published by:
German Pharma Health Fund e.V. (GPHF),
P.O. Box 15 23, D-61405 Oberursel
Tel.: + 49 / 61 71 / 50 39 9-0
Fax: + 49 / 61 71 / 50 39 9-20
Internet: www.gphf.org, E-Mail: info@gphf.org
Editors: Christian von Berg, Michael Martell
Responsible for the content: Dr. Gabriele Küsters, GPHF
Printing: Druckerei Siefert GmbH, Frankfurt am Main