

Press release

MHRA seizes 7.7 million doses of illegal medicines and removes hundreds of illegal online listings as part of Operation Pangea

Operation Pangea brings together health regulators, customs authorities, law enforcement agencies, and private sector partners to tackle the threat posed by global criminal networks

From: **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency**
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The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has seized almost eight million doses of illegal medicines as part of an annual global coordinated operation to tackle the illegal online sale of medicines and medical devices.

Operation Pangea, coordinated by Interpol and involving around 90 countries, is the world's largest initiative of its kind. It brings together health regulators, customs authorities, law enforcement agencies, and private sector partners to tackle the threat posed by criminal networks operating in the global supply of illegal medicines.

This year's operation took place between December 2024 and May 2025. Working with law enforcement partners, the MHRA's Criminal Enforcement Unit (CEU) seized 7.7 million doses of illicit medicines with an estimated value of £17.2m. Among the products seized in the UK were various prescription-only medications including powerful painkillers, anti-depressants and sleeping pills.

The CEU also coordinated several arrest operations, denied gangs access to almost £1.4m in criminal profits, and removed 367 websites and social media accounts offering medical products to the public illegally.

Do not self-prescribe.

Self-diagnosis and self-medication can be very dangerous. If you have a concern about your health, seek advice from a healthcare professional and only obtain medicines from a trusted source.

[Visit the #FakeMeds website \(https://fakemedics.campaign.gov.uk/\)](https://fakemedics.campaign.gov.uk/) for tools and resources to help people purchase medication or medical devices safely online.

Andy Morling, who heads the MHRA's Criminal Enforcement Unit (CEU), said:

“Criminals trade in illegal medicines for no other reason than to make money. Not only are these people breaking the law, but they also have no regard for your health.

“Buying medicines from unverified sources, online or elsewhere, means there is no guarantee that the products are safe or effective. Some can contain dangerous or illegal ingredients that could result in severe illness, addiction or even death.

“People also need to be aware that turning to illegal online sellers can leave them exposed to bank fraud and identity theft.

“This year's operation is another example of how the MHRA and its international partners are joining forces to tackle the criminal gangs causing so much misery and harm around the world.”

Notes to editors

- Anyone who suspects they are having a side effect from a medicine are encouraged to talk to their doctor, pharmacist or nurse and report it directly to the MHRA Yellow Card scheme, either through the [Yellow Card website \(https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/\)](https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/) or by searching the Google Play or Apple App stores for MHRA Yellow Card.
- The MHRA's Accredited Financial Investigators are authorised by the National Crime Agency under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA). They support investigations by tracing, freezing, and confiscating assets linked to crime, including money laundering and the illegal supply of medicines. Their work includes seizing cash, valuable items, and freezing bank accounts or cryptocurrency suspected of criminal origins. The Home Office's Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) allows a proportion of the proceeds of crime recovered under POCA, to be redistributed to agencies involved in the asset recovery process. The Home Office encourages agencies to invest ARIS funds to drive up performance on asset recovery or, where appropriate, to fund local crime fighting priorities for the benefit of the community.
- Operation Pangea is a global initiative coordinated by [INTERPOL \(https://www.interpol.int/en\)](https://www.interpol.int/en) that targets the illegal online sale and distribution of unlicensed and counterfeit medicines and medical devices. Involving police, customs, health regulators, and private sector partners across approximately 90, the operation aims to protect public health by disrupting criminal networks and raising awareness of the dangers of buying medicines from unregulated sources.
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
- The MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
- For media enquiries, please contact the newscentre@mhra.gov.uk, or call on 020 3080 7651.

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