



Integrity Talks

Fighting Counterfeit Medicines and PPE in Times of Covid-19 – Key Takeaways

#Healthcare #CounterfeitMedicine #Transparency

26 November 2020 | Indonesia

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to increased demand for medical devices, medicines and personal protective equipment (PPE). As part of the national effort, the government and the health sector have made great efforts to provide adequate supplies of medicines and PPE for health workers and the general public. However, there are some challenges in implementation, such as the risk of counterfeiting.

In times of crisis, integrity, transparency and collective action are important approaches to overcome arising challenges. The launch event of the Integrity Talks series in Indonesia initiated a multi-stakeholder dialogue between representatives of government institutions, companies and civil society organisations on the opportunities and challenges in combating counterfeit medicines and PPE. The discussion also aimed to raise public awareness on the issue.

Main Challenges

- Dependence on imported raw materials and expensive medicines, which risks people choosing low-quality products at cheaper prices that are more accessible.
- Strongly increased demand for medical devices leads to products being distributed that do not meet safety standards.
- Time pressure and urgency can result in products being selected incorrectly, which can pose significant health risks.
- Difficulty in conducting thorough quality control when procurement processes have to be digital and are subject to time limits.
- Lack of public awareness of counterfeit products and the dangers of their use or consumption.



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Best practices

- Relaxation of product licensing policies with consideration and adherence to necessary quality standards; bureaucratic support for PPE manufacturers by providing a virtual help desk.
- Selecting only materials that have been tested and classified according to the appropriate test method (ISO 14325:2018).
- Conducting random sampling and product testing of health products on the market to prevent counterfeiting.
- Strategic involvement of health organisations to encourage their members to comply with procurement rules.
- Close collaboration with online marketplaces to remove links to products that do not comply with regulations.
- Preventing price increases for medicines and PPE by complying with Health Technology Assessment, which sets prices through risk analysis and results of product testing.
- Raising awareness to draw people's attention to the dangers of counterfeit medicines and PPE.

Recommendations

- Collaboration of all relevant stakeholders from local to national level to monitor the pharmaceutical market and prevent the distribution of counterfeit medicines and PPE; taking into account early warnings and red flags from other countries and regional authorities.
- Enforcing stricter laws and regulations to create a sustainable business environment with regard to the healthcare sector.
- Ensuring transparent procurement processes to strengthen integrity and prevent corruption; even in emergency situations, integrity and transparency are never negotiable.
- Understanding the causes of product shortages and analysing the needs, risks, resources and capabilities to avoid facing the same problem in future.
- Supervising the import trade system outside the national customs area to prevent the import of counterfeit medicines and equipment that does not meet quality standards.
- Raising awareness among the general public about PPE standards and the dangers of counterfeit and poor quality products.
- Encouraging civil society to report suspicious products on the market.