

Fake drugs labelled as Chinese tea: France in record haul (Update)

April 10 2014

Aspirin, anti-diarrhoea and erectile dysfunction drugs: French customs have seized millions of counterfeit medicines imported from China in what they described as the biggest haul of its kind within the European Union.

A total of 2.4 million pills, capsules and powdered medicine were seized at the end of February in the northern port of Le Havre in 601 boxes labelled as containing Chinese tea, customs officials said Thursday.

"Some of the drugs contain no active ingredient, which constitutes outright cheating of consumers," said a customs statement.

"Others have different levels of the active ingredient compared to the authentic drug which means they could represent a serious health risk for patients taking them."

According to French customs, the previous record seizure in the EU was for 1.2 million doses of counterfeit aspirin, also made at Le Havre in Normandy, in May 2013.

Like the seizure this year, the powdered aspirin was mainly composed of glucose.

Le Havre is a huge commercial port in France through which nearly 2.5 million containers transit annually.

Every year, customs seize tens of thousands of counterfeit products that include television sets, mobile phones, auto parts, clothes and medicine, most of which come from China en route to African countries such as Nigeria.

Last year, counterfeit drugs represented nearly 20 percent of all seized products, and consisted mainly of fake pills of Viagra and Cialis for erectile dysfunction, as well as aspirin.

The problem of counterfeit drug production in China was highlighted last year when the country's authorities launched a crackdown which led to 1,300 arrests in December and the closure of dozens of unauthorised online pharmacies.

According to the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest, a US non-profit medical research group, the traffic in fake medicine is highly lucrative, generating 55 billion euros (\$76 billion) globally in 2010, a 90-percent rise from 2005.

In Europe, meanwhile, a study conducted by pharmaceutical giant Pfizer in 2010 showed that the market for fake drugs was worth around 10.5 billion euros, including one billion euros in France.

And according to the European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines, 62 percent of drugs bought on the Internet in 2011 were fake.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Fake drugs labelled as Chinese tea: France in record haul (Update) (2014, April 10) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-04-fake-drugs-chinese-tea-france.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.