

FDA seizes counterfeit drugs, devices sold online

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International effort takes aim at more than 1,050 websites.

(HealthDay)—The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, along with international partners, moved this week against more than 1,050 websites that sell potentially dangerous counterfeit medicines and medical devices, the agency said Thursday.

Illegal medicines and medical devices were seized worldwide, and warnings were sent to the operators of offending websites, the FDA said in a news release.

"Our efforts to protect the health of American patients by preventing the online sale of potentially dangerous illegal medical products will not cease," said George Karavetsos, director of the FDA's Office of Criminal Investigations.

Counterfeit prescription drugs that claim to be generic versions of brand-name drugs that are sold illegally on the websites include generic

Nolvadex, generic Meridia, generic Valium, generic Truvada and generic Advair Diskus, according to the FDA.

Mail screenings in Chicago, Miami and New York found that some of these counterfeit drugs—which included antidepressants, hormone replacement therapies, sleep aids and drugs to treat erectile dysfunction, high cholesterol and seizures—were on their way to American consumers, the FDA said.

Bogus medical devices sold on websites that were targeted include hyaluronic acid and other dermal fillers and "colon hydrotherapy" products. Dermal fillers are used for concealing facial wrinkles.

As part of the international effort led by Interpol, the FDA said it sent warning letters to the operators of nearly 400 websites selling unapproved or misbranded prescription medicines to U.S. consumers, and to nine companies distributing unapproved [medical devices](#) online.

This operation "provides yet another avenue for the FDA to engage with our [international law enforcement](#) partners on these critical issues," Karavetsos said.

"We are not only pleased to be a part of this strong international enforcement effort, but resolved to do everything we can to ensure that the global problem of illegal Internet drug and device sales is deterred as a result," he added.

Potential health risks are one obvious danger posed by illegal online pharmacies and medical device sellers, the agency said. Other threats to consumers include credit card fraud, identity theft and computer viruses, the FDA added.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more

about [buying medicines online](#).

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