

# Bad Drugs/Faux Pharmacies/Fear and Pharmaceuticals

By ACSH Staff — October 5, 2006

A series of articles by Dr. Henry Miller in [TCSDaily.com](#) [1] ([excerpted on Galen.org](#) [2]) and [LegalNews.TV](#) [3] on Oct. 4, 2006 and the [Washington Times](#) [4] on Oct. 5 cited ACSH's report [Counterfeit Drugs: Coming to a Pharmacy Near You](#) [5]:

From TCSDaily.com:

*According to the ACSH report, "as much as 10 percent of the nation's wholesale drug supply travels through a complex and confusing network of distributors, intermediaries and secondary wholesalers, a vast array of businesses, most legitimate, many semi-legitimate and some outright criminal." Because manufacturers sell drugs at widely disparate prices, so-called "diverters" can realize profits by buying low and selling higher. But the competition is cutthroat, and the murkiness and absence of regulation in this "gray market" enables counterfeiters to introduce fraudulent products into the distribution system, often at astronomical mark-ups.*

From LegalNews:

*What can be done to protect the integrity of pharmaceuticals dispensed in the United States?*

*First, Congress must increase the penalties for drug counterfeiting, and the FDA must more aggressively enforce regulations that require documentation of the "pedigree," or history, of a drug as it moves through distribution channels.*

*Second, we need to apply new track-and-trace technologies to uniquely identify and track the distribution of drugs. (And similar to our confrontations with dealers of illicit drugs, in order to keep ahead of the bad guys we will have to innovate constantly.)*

*Third, new authentication technologies, such as holograms and ultra-violet and forensic tags, must be developed to make it more difficult for counterfeiters to*

imitate legitimate drugs. A promising new technology would attach mixtures of pH-sensitive fluorescent dyes to drug molecules and measure changes in fluorescence in the presence of solutions of different compositions.

Fourth, when making Internet purchases, consumers should patronize only pharmacies on the National Board of Pharmacy's recommended list ([www.nabp.net/vipps/consumer/listall.asp](http://www.nabp.net/vipps/consumer/listall.asp) <sup>[6]</sup>).

Finally, consumers should be vigilant for anything amiss in any prescription drug obtained anywhere -- unusual color, texture, markings or packaging and, when feasible, for any differences in effectiveness or side effects.

From the *Washington Times*:

A comprehensive analysis of the problem just published by the American Council on Science and Health, called "[Counterfeit Drugs: Coming to A Pharmacy Near You](#)," <sup>[5]</sup> describes the breadth and magnitude of the problem. Although quantitative estimates are difficult, it appears something on the order of 10 percent of the world's drug supply is counterfeit, encompassing not only products that are completely fake but also those tampered with, contaminated, diluted, repackaged or mislabeled in a way that misrepresents the contents, dosage, origin or expiration date. The World Health Organization estimated in 2003 that as much as 5 to 7% of all drugs sold in the United States may be fraudulent in some way.

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[1] <http://www.tcsdaily.com/article.aspx?id=100406B>

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[3] [http://legalnews.tv/commentary/faux\\_pharmacies\\_countering\\_counterfeit\\_drugs\\_20061004.html](http://legalnews.tv/commentary/faux_pharmacies_countering_counterfeit_drugs_20061004.html)

[4] <http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20061004-090354-1263r.htm>

[5] [https://www.acsh.org/../../news/newsID.1385/news\\_detail.asp](https://www.acsh.org/../../news/newsID.1385/news_detail.asp)

[6] <http://www.nabp.net/vipps/consumer/listall.asp>