HSA SEIZES ILLEGAL MEDICINES IN BUKIT PANJANG AREA

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) launched an immediate investigation following a tip-off that illegal medicines were being sold in the Bukit Panjang area. Officers from HSA’s Centre for Pharmaceutical Administration (CPA) conducted intensive surveillance at the suspected areas on 28 and 29 January 02.

2 At around 6pm on 29 January 02, our surveillance team spotted a female suspect in a coffee shop at Block 259, Bangkit Road and later trailed her to Block 277. Our officers observed the suspect approaching a middle-aged man and subsequently moved in and caught her selling illegal medicines to him.

3 A total of 120 tablets of the product *Wei Ge Wang*, in two different packings and strengths (see attached photograph below), were found and seized from the suspect. Each pack, comprising 4 tablets, was being sold for $8. The suspect is a Chinese national who revealed that she had bought the medicines in China and hand-carried them into Singapore for sale.

4 The seized medicines were sent to HSA’s Centre for Analytical Science for analysis, and found to contain Sildenafil. Sildenafil, the active ingredient of *Viagra*, is a substance controlled under the Poisons Act, and it is an offence for an unlicensed person to import, sell or possess for sale any product containing a poison. HSA will initiate legal action against the suspect once it completes its investigations.
5 This is not the first time that HSA has encountered such illegal medicines. In September last year, 320 tablets of similar name and packaging as those seized on 29 Jan 02, were referred to HSA by the Customs & Excise (C&E) Department.

6 Noting that medicines from dubious and illegal sources can find their way here, being brought into Singapore by travellers, HSA cooperates closely with the C&E Department to prevent illegal imports of such medicines into Singapore. We also maintain vigilant surveillance to detect illegal medicines that may appear in the local market.

A REMINDER ON SAFE DRUG PRACTICES
7 HSA strongly advises the public not to purchase any medicines from dubious or illegal sources, including from individuals, as the safety, efficacy and quality of such medicines cannot be vouched for. The danger is even greater when it involves a prescription-only medicine, which should only be taken according to a doctor’s instruction. Viagra is a drug that must be taken under proper medical supervision and for the correct indication, as it can cause serious adverse cardiovascular effects which have been fatal in some patients.

8 We would like to remind the public that it is an offence for anyone found importing, selling or possessing for sale any medicines without the necessary licences under the Poisons Act. Infringement under the Poisons Act renders one liable on conviction to a fine up to $10,000 or imprisonment for a term of up to two years or to both.

9 HSA encourages members of the public to report any information on suspected illegal sales of medicines to our officers during office hours:

Mail / Walk-in : Surveillance & Enforcement Division
                Centre for Pharmaceutical Administration
                Health Sciences Authority
                2, Jalan Bukit Merah
                Singapore 169547

Telephone : 3255412
Facsimile : 3255628
In the back row: the front and back views of the two different packings of the seized illegal medicines

In the front row: the tablets in two different types of blister-packing

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