



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE  
6 FEBRUARY 2012**

## **HSA ALERTS ON SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS RELATED TO CONSUMPTION OF ILLEGAL SEXUAL ENHANCEMENT HEALTH PRODUCTS**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) alerts members of the public on a series of serious adverse events (AE) related to the consumption of illegal sexual enhancement health products. Over the past week, four patients have been admitted to hospitals with dangerously low blood sugar levels related to the consumption of these products. Two of them were unconscious when brought to the hospitals while the other two were confused and weak. Although all the patients are no longer in a critical condition, the two who were initially unconscious suffered more severe consequences. One of them remains in a non-communicative state while the other can only hold simple conversations.

2 Based on HSA's assessment of the cases, the adverse events experienced by the patients are likely related to the consumption of illegal health products used for sexual enhancement. In view of the serious nature of the adverse events, HSA strongly reiterates its warnings on the dangers of illegal health products and reminds members of the public not to buy or consume such products.

### **Investigations by HSA**

3 The four AE reports were received by HSA over the span of one week from 30 January to 2 February 2012. These four male patients whose ages are between 30 to 78 years old were hospitalised after developing very low blood sugar levels that were suspected to be related to the consumption of illegal health products. Their urine and blood were tested and found to contain glibenclamide, an anti-diabetic medicine which was identified as the cause of their dangerously low blood sugar. Of the four patients, three are non-diabetics and one is a diabetic. The latter however was not prescribed glibenclamide for the treatment of diabetes. Although the patients could not positively identify the products that they have consumed, based on the case histories of the patients, the test results, and HSA's surveillance activities, HSA has assessed that these cases are likely related to consumption of illegal sexual enhancement health products. Glibenclamide has frequently been found as an adulterant in illegal sexual enhancement health products. In the past, pills like Power 1 Walnut, Singapore Power 1, fake Cialis and Santi Bovine Penis Erecting pills were found to be similarly adulterated with glibenclamide, causing many patients to suffer serious adverse effects of seizures, coma and death. (Please refer to [Annex A](#).)

4 Glibenclamide is a potent western medicine used in diabetics for lowering their blood sugar levels to normal levels. It is a prescription-only medicine and should be used under medical supervision. Health products not registered as medicinal products by HSA should not contain substances controlled under the Poisons Act such as glibenclamide. This medicine can cause a person's blood sugar to drop from normal to dangerously low levels. Very low blood sugar levels can cause confusion, seizures and unconsciousness which can progress to coma and death, if left untreated.

### **Actions taken by HSA**

5 Investigations are still ongoing and HSA is gathering more leads from the patients regarding the health products that they had consumed and linked to these serious adverse events. Healthcare professionals have also been informed of these cases and advised to report any adverse events suspected to be related to illegal products to HSA. HSA is alerting members of the public at this preliminary stage so that they will be vigilant and not fall prey to the vendors and peddlers who sell such illegal products.

6 HSA has been closely monitoring the sales of illegal sexual enhancement health products in Singapore and has conducted more than 80 raids and seized about 1.4 million units of such illegal products over the last 3 years. More than 20 illegal sellers of these products have been prosecuted by HSA in the past few years.

7 In addition, from September 2011, HSA has rolled out an ongoing public education campaign to raise public awareness on the health dangers of buying such illegal products and health products from dubious sources. This is with the aim of reducing the demand for illegal health products through pro-active educational efforts. More information can be found at [www.healthdangersonline.sg](http://www.healthdangersonline.sg)

### **HSA Advisory**

8 HSA would like to reiterate the dangers of purchasing health products from dubious sources like street peddlers, make shift stalls and over the Internet. They may contain undeclared potent substances that can cause serious harm when taken without medical supervision. Says Associate Professor Chan Cheng Leng<sup>1</sup>, Director of the Vigilance Division, HSA, "We are very concerned about the recent occurrence of serious adverse effects. People should stop buying and taking these harmful products. Do not buy sexual enhancement health products from friends, relatives, hawkers or any dubious sources. Go and see a doctor to get the proper medicines. The health hazards associated with illegal health products are very real and serious health consequences like stroke and coma can happen to anyone who takes these harmful products."

9 Glibenclamide is a substance controlled under the Poisons Act. It is an offence for an unlicensed person to import, sell or possess for sale any product containing these substances. Anyone found guilty of an offence under the Poisons Act is liable to a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of up to two years. HSA takes a

serious view against those engaged in the sale and supply of illegal health products and will take strong enforcement action against such persons.

10 Members of the public who have any information that could help with the investigations may contact HSA's Enforcement Branch at Tel: 6866-3485 during office hours (Monday to Friday) or email: [hsa\\_is@hsa.gov.sg](mailto:hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg). The public is also requested to report any other suspicious sales of illegal products to HSA at the same contact number/e-mail. Additionally, members of public are encouraged to visit [www.healthdangersonline.sg](http://www.healthdangersonline.sg) to learn more about the dangers of buying illegal health products from dubious sources.

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#### ▪ **About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services, Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. It operates the national blood bank, Bloodbank@HSA, securing the nation's blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

#### ▪ **About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group**

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards.

## HSA ALERTS ON SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS RELATED TO CONSUMPTION OF ILLEGAL SEXUAL ENHANCEMENT HEALTH PRODUCTS

### Past Examples of Illegal Health Products Touted for Sexual Enhancement



Photo: The above shows past examples of illegal health products touted for sexual enhancement.