

Wholesale Bulletin

Monthly Service for wholesalers

May 09

DTP putting UK supply chain under stress, say parallel traders

Direct-to-pharmacy (DTP) distribution models are putting the pharma supply chain under stress by circumventing the role of the wholesaler, parallel importers have told the UK regulator.

DTP is also behind the growing trade in exports by UK pharmacists, says the European Association of Euro-Pharmaceutical Companies (EAEP), in its response to the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)'s call for comments on its proposals to strengthen the UK medicines supply chain in light of the growing threat of counterfeit drugs. With price differentials between European markets persisting, and DTP models aiming to close down trade initiated by wholesalers, "it is economically obvious that the incentive to trade moves downstream to a level where the freedom of trade is not hampered by anti-competitive practices of pharmaceutical manufacturers," says the parallel importers' trade association.

"The right thing to do, from a clean regulatory perspective, is to enable the wholesale sector to fully play its role of purchasing from manufacturers and selling medicines to pharmacies," writes EAEP secretary-general Heinz Kobelt. This would "liberate" the pharmacy profession from the "ever-stricter restrictions imposed by the manufacturers, in the absence of determined and rapid action by the competition authorities," he suggests, adding that pharmacists wishing to engage in wholesaling activities can of course apply for a wholesale dealer's license.

To tackle the threat of counterfeit drugs entering the legitimate supply chain, the EAEP suggests to the MHRA that it should consider restricting intra-European Union (EU) trade in medicines to licensed operators only. They are subject to Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) obligations and, therefore, are governed by a more stringent set of quality and safety requirements than those operators which are regulated by Good Distribution Practice ((GDP) requirements only. This proposal would not require a change in legislation, simply more stringent interpretation and application of the existing law, and would help to facilitate stricter standards for transport and establishing an audit trail, it adds.

The parallel trade group also suggests to the MHRA that, when a wholesale dealer's licence is revoked, this should be made public. And, on the Agency's proposal to introduce a "due diligence" obligation for holders of wholesale dealer licenses and Responsible Persons (RP) to report suspicious incidents and events, it says that the RP should also be able to obtain information from the regulator or the marketing authorization holder in cases where suspicious material might be on the market. "Information channels on safety-related issues should be both ways," it says.

Tamiflu no longer available to pharmacies

Pharmacists will be unable to buy further supplies of antiviral drug Tamiflu as the UK prepares for a possible swine flu pandemic, the government has confirmed.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health (DH) said it was working with manufacturers to increase its stockpile of treatment courses to cover

80 per cent of the population from the current level of 50 per cent.

The spokesperson added that Tamiflu had not been withdrawn from pharmacy supply but that antiviral medication will be made available for eligible cases at local level by health protection units.

The confirmation came as AAH announced it no longer had stock of either Tamiflu or alternative antiviral Relenza. A spokesperson for the wholesaler said it would not be receiving further supplies from manufacturers "in the foreseeable future".

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Special points of Interest

This bulletin is free to interested wholesaler employees

Please send names of new subscribers to-
Jackie.@wavedata.co.uk

If you have articles, comments or story ideas, please send them to the email above

www.wavedata.co.uk

Patients to get counterfeit warning with each prescription

New guidance to patients to raise public awareness of fake medicine and its dangers has been launched by the RPSGB and MHRA.

Pharmacies nationwide will receive the guidance, which has been developed in conjunction with patient groups to ensure it is clear and easy to read. Pharmacies will be asked to distribute the new double-sided postcard-sized leaflet to patients in their prescription bags.

The leaflet offers advice to patients about what counterfeit medicine are, how to minimise purchasing fakes and what to do if they suspect they have been sold or supplied counterfeits.

One side of the postcard explains the safest way to purchase medicines and the other outlines 'The dangers of faking it'.

The RPSGB's head of practice says: "Counterfeit medicine does not work and can make you seriously ill. It's important that people are aware that they should always get their medicine from a reputable source such as a pharmacist or a registered online pharmacy site which has the RPSGB's Internet Pharmacy Logo - and I hope these postcards will help to achieve that."

The MHRA is also looking at ways to target those that use the internet to buy counterfeit medicine.

Guidance for pharmacists explains the background to counterfeit medicine production and highlights how organised criminal gangs have become involved in the production of illegal medicines, supplying them through the internet, often to unwitting patients.

It offers pharmacists invaluable practical advice on the correct steps to take when they encounter suspected counterfeit medicines. These steps include reporting illegal websites to the MHRA to ensure immediate patient safety.



GSK pledges help in flu outbreak

GlaxoSmithKline has pledged to closely monitor the swine flu outbreak that began in Mexico, and assist in access to treatment for the disease.

Its announcement came as the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak of swine influenza a public health emergency and raised its level of alert.

GSK's Relenza is one of two antiviral treatments, along with Roche's Tamiflu, to have a positive effect on the new flu strain and both have been used to treat patients in Mexico.

GSK has so far supplied 100,000 packs of Relenza and 170,000 additional doses of its seasonal flu vaccine to the Mexican authorities.

The company is urgently assessing its ability to upscale Relenza production and has approached governments and organisations, including the WHO and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to understand what support they might need.

The virus was first reported in Mexico and confirmed cases have now reached as far afield as Israel and New Zealand.

The suspected death toll from the influenza A (H1N1) strain is more than 150 in Mexico. Across the US and Canada almost 50 cases have been confirmed and are receiving treatment and in the UK.

Governments have been stockpiling Relenza and Tamiflu in anticipation of a major influenza outbreak. In the UK, health secretary Alan Johnson says the NHS has sufficient stockpiles of both drugs to treat more than half the UK population if needed.

Polyclinic sparks competition for practices' patients

London's first polyclinic will mean local practices have to fight to hang on to their patients, the local PCT professional executive committee (PEC) chairman has admitted.

Lord Darzi officially opened the new Loxford Polyclinic - a converted pub in Ilford, east London - last week. It will act as a 'hub', providing services to four nearby 'spoke' practices, in a combined 'polysystem' serving 50,000 patients.

The new centre will house two existing practices, with a combined list of 12,000. But the practices - Henley Road and John Telford Clinic - hope to increase this to 20,000 by the end of the third year.

Dr Richard Price, chairman of Redbridge PCT's PEC said it was a 'fact' that other practices could lose patients to the new polyclinic.

'He added that the PCT wanted to 'cooperate on ways of driving up the quality of the spokes as well as hub'. The polyclinic includes 59 consulting rooms, as well as three minor surgery rooms. It will provide a range of services including pharmacy, dentistry, X-rays and diagnostics.

The new centre will open to the public in June.

WaveData – Top ten products

According to WaveData, these were the most commonly investigated products in searches of the online pricing data at www.wavedata.net

Both uk and pi prices were viewed for each product, giving some indication of where the focus was in April 09

Lansoprazole Caps 15mg 28
Simvastatin Tabs 10mg 28
Clindamycin Caps 150mg 24
Flixotide Evohaler 250mcg 1 (120 Doses)
Lansoprazole Caps 30mg 28
Mebeverine Tabs 135mg 100
Simvastatin Tabs 40mg 28
Bicalutamide Tabs 150mg 28
Bicalutamide Tabs 50mg 28
Co-Codamol Caps 8mg/500mg 100

Interpol warns of counterfeit swine flu drugs

The world's largest international police organization has warned of the danger of criminals exploiting the swine flu outbreak through spam emails and websites to sell illegal, unlicensed or fake medicines.

Internet security firms report that around 3%-4% of spam mails currently being circulated are related to swine flu, and this number is expected to increase. Similarly, hundreds of new web pages related to swine flu have been created in the past week, say experts at Interpol, which operates in 187 countries.

"It has been seen time and time again that following a global threat or natural disaster, criminals exploit the situation for their own financial gain and in this situation they are searching to take advantage of people's fears about their health," said the executive director of police services at Interpol.

"By responding to spam swine flu emails or attempting to order medication on-line through illegal and unregulated websites, people are risking their wellbeing and their money," and any unsolicited emails containing deals or links to websites offering swine flu-related information packs or medicines "should be treated with extreme caution," he warned.

Criminal organizations and individuals involved in the production of counterfeit pharmaceuticals may also attempt to take advantage of the current health situation through the manufacture of fake antiviral drugs, he added.

"Any product which can be manufactured can be counterfeited, and while there is so far no evidence to suggest that fake antivirals are being manufactured in response to the swine flu outbreak, this is an area which we will continue to monitor in order to identify any cases if or when they emerge," he said.

Tesco in recruitment drive to boost instore services

Tesco plans to cut its reliance on locums and look instead to in-house training and recruitment of employed pharmacists to boost services at stores.

Tesco healthcare and pharmacy category director Ashley Hicks said: "We find that the more we can staff our pharmacies with people we've recruited as part of a Tesco programme, the easier it is to make sure that works really well for our staff and customers."

The comments came as Tesco outlined plans to expand its pharmacy chain to over 300 sites by 2010.

Pharmacy-led services including allergy testing and smoking cessation clinics will feature heavily, Mr Hicks predicted.

Tesco recruited 110 pharmacists and 45 pre-registration graduates last year and expected a similar figure this year, Mr Hicks added.

He said: "We've put a huge amount of training and investment into recruitment and retention... it's helping us have more of our hours covered by the Tesco pharmacy team rather than relying on locum support."

The public should not be taken in by spam e-mails offering to supply these antivirals, said Mr Preece. "Most of the drugs offered in this way turn out to be counterfeit and may contain anything from sugar to more dangerous substances that can seriously put health at risk," he added.

I will be issuing the next bulletin on the 10th June 09, please let me know by the 3rd June 09, if you would like to add or suggest any articles/comments

If you have any colleagues who would like to receive this, please let them know about it.

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