

《Cote d ' Ivoire faces counterfeit medicine challenges》

As the African continent grapples with the effects of Malaria and tuberculosis, a new challenge is emerging, that of counterfeit medicines. According to estimates, more than 30% of malaria and tuberculosis medicines are fake and over 700,000 people die every year as a result of taking those counterfeit drugs. In Cote d ' Ivoire this is a big challenge, one that the government is working around the clock to tackle.

According to the World Health Organization one in 10 drugs around the world is counterfeit. But this statistic can reach seven in 10 in developing countries. Yet it's these nations that have the highest number of people in need. In Cote d'Ivoire the trade in fake medicines is at an all time high. But most of its population seems unperturbed by the fact that they might be buying fake drugs.

"Counterfeit medicines are cheap. And these medicines have got the same effects like those that are in the drugstore. When I use these medicines I feel well. These medicines help especially those like me with no money." said Serge Yao, Customer.

"The reason why counterfeit medicines are all around Abidjan, it is due to poverty, and the high prices of drugstore medicines. The government should watch on the distribution of the medicines. Who are the people who distribute in the street? Because those medicines do not come by themselves in the street. Those who are in charge of the distribution are responsible for fraud." said Droh Hilaire, Traditional Medicine Seller.

The government launched a major plan to fight counterfeit drugs. Last year it destroyed about 18000 tones of fake drugs. But despite these efforts new ones still find their way into the market.

"The population does not know the real risk of counterfeit medicines. These Medicines are very dangerous. Although some cures they can cause severe drawbacks. Those dealing in these drugs must be punished. Medicines must be managed by medicine professionals." said Dr. Andre Kouassi, Director, Medicine Laboratory.

On top of the dangerous effects fake drugs may have, the health ministry says they are also costing the government millions in lost revenue.

"These illicit smuggling of medicines is have a severe effect on the pharmaceutical industry. I would say that there is a huge loss of money at the financial level. The cost is high, there is an increase mortality as well. I would recommend a "universal cover of health". I think this would be of great help to fight against street medicines. Everyone will have an account, and people will not buy fake drugs anymore." said Dr. Duncan Rachelle, Executive, Cote d'Ivoire Health Ministry.

The government is now calling for a global approach in dealing with the problem.