

MPS RINGS ALARM BELL OVER ONLINE MEDICINES

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PETALING JAYA: Medicines that need doctors' prescriptions are being sold rampantly online, warned a pharmacist group.

Expressing concern, Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS) president Amrahi Buang (*pic*) said such medicines compromised patients' safety as the public had no way of gauging whether these products were indeed genuine.



These medicines, he pointed out, could have been tampered with or tainted with impurities and microorganisms, posing a serious threat to health.

"Even if the medicines are not fake, patients taking them without prescription from a doctor may suffer contraindications if they are not suitable," he said in a statement here on Friday.

Among the medicines being sold on various online platforms are tadalafil, which is prescribed for erectile dysfunction, and isotretinoin that is used for severe acne.

The society, said Amrahi, was pushing for the Health Ministry to take immediate action by engaging with the owners of these online platforms to block all sales of medication or poisons.

"If need be, the ministry should amend the present laws to curb all these sales in the nearest possible future," he said, adding that MPS had received complaints from its members and the public.

These medicines, reminded Amrahi, should only be sold by a licensed pharmacist with a valid prescription or dispensed by a medical practitioner for the treatment of his own patients only.

Section 13 of the Poisons Act 1952 does not allow the sale or supply of medicine without a valid licence and those flouting the law face fines of up to RM3,000 or a year's jail for the first offence.

Based on the 2016 Pharmacy Programme Statistical Report, Amrahi said enforcement officers from the Pharmaceutical Division had carried out 1,396 raids and brought 1,329 cases to court.

"Illegal products worth up to RM47.8mil were confiscated and RM5.1mil worth of fines were collected," he said.

Asked if the matter had been reported to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), Amrahi said the division had collaborated with both MCMC and the Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism Ministry.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the ministry is aware of the situation and taking action through MCMC.

“We are also calling the online sales platforms, and have informed MPS regarding our action,” he added.