

Careful of Counterfeits!

Counterfeiting products is generally considered to be a problem in developing countries. In reality, the problem is a global one with sales of counterfeit medicines in 2010 estimated at 57 billion Euro.

These 57 billion Euro not only include counterfeit medicines but also medical products. **As recently as** May this year, the European Council reported in the MEDICRIME Convention that almost 69 percent of articles **seized** in postal traffic were medicines. The Convention defines “a counterfeit medical product” as a medical pro-

duct whose identity, nature and/or **source** are **fraudulently misrepresented**, including information on the label. Consumers still order medicines online for prices much lower than through normal pharmacy **outlet** sources and don't think twice that these medicines are in fact **only available on prescription!**

Elderly female pharmacy customer: Good morning. Do you speak English?

PTA: Yes. How may I help you?

Well I'm a little worried about a friend of mine. I was visiting him and his wife yesterday, and we got talking about aches and pains and medication. He told me about medication that he had found on a foreign internet pharmacy.

I see. What was the medication for?

He is 67 and quite overweight. Both of them are, and anyway he found this medication that promises to more or less melt away the pounds. I remember reading about something similar a few years ago, it was in all the papers about this medication for obesity that caused problems with the heart.

That could be **fenfluramine**. And he ordered this medication from an online pharmacy? I think that you

should tell him that he must stop taking this medication as soon as possible. You see products such as fenfluramine have a negative effect on the cardiopulmonary system. And if he has ordered it from an online pharmacy, the chance that it is counterfeit is quite high.

Oh my goodness! What can I tell him?

One idea might be to send him to us so that we can advise him on genuine products. And to bring the medication with him so we can send it for analysis.

Isn't there a danger that medication here might also be counterfeit?

While this possibility does exist, the channels of **distribution** in Germany, from manufacturing to **wholesale** to **retail**, are all extremely well monitored. The danger is minimal.

Why do people buy medication online? I can't understand it, especially prescription medicine. How can one be sure of the efficacy of an online product?

I know, it's unbelievable. Compliance is not guaranteed. Sometimes there is no active ingredient, or there is 300 percent active ingredient, or in injection phials only distilled water. And what can you do if you have side effects that are not listed in the **patient information leaflet**? Another reason for coming to us for advice in the first place!

I see. I'll send my friends to you right away. You have been very helpful, thank you. ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

Counterfeits	Fälschungen
Billion	Milliarde
as recently as	erst
seized	beschlagnahmt
source	Quelle
fraudulently	auf betrügerische Weise
misrepresented	falsch dargestellt
outlet	Verkaufsstelle
only available on prescription	verschreibungspflichtig
reliable	verlässlich
aches and pains	(ugs.) Wehwehchen
obesity	Adipositas, Fettleibigkeit
fenfluramine	Fenfluramin, ein Anorektikum (Appetitzügler), das Ende der 1990er-Jahre wegen starker Nebenwirkungen vom Markt genommen wurde
distribution	Verteilung
wholesale	Großhandel
retail	Einzelhandel
efficacy	Wirksamkeit
patient information leaflet (PIL)	Beipackzettel