

How ASOP EU contributes to the fight against antimicrobial resistance?

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacy in the EU (ASOP EU) joined the EU-level launch event marking the 11th European Antibiotic Awareness Day on November 15th. ASOP EU with its partner ASOP Global is a nonprofit organization dedicated to **combat illegal online pharmacies and falsified medicines** in the United States, Europe, India, and Asia through research, education and advocacy.

Fake medicines may have too much, too little or no active ingredients, may contain poisons, paint thinners and other potential harmful or deadly ingredients. People may risk economic or personal data along with their health in purchasing drugs from an illegal online pharmacy.

Approximately 96% of the 35,000 websites selling prescription and OTC medicines are not legal and operating out of compliance, and target consumers and patients on any given day. ASOP EU research shows that over 60% of those who buy their medicines online do so without prior knowledge of this fact.

A [report](#) issued in March 2017 by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (a non-profit organization comprised of state pharmacy regulators in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries) revealed that two-thirds of organic search engine results for antibiotics, yielded rogue websites that sell medications without a valid prescription, operating in opposition to national and local laws and relevant pharmacy practice standards. Purchasing antibiotics from these websites means consumers may take medications without oversight from a licensed healthcare provider and this contributes to antibiotic resistance.

The illegal sale of medicines is a major public health concern and highlights the need to educate patients and caregivers about how **the risky misuse of antibiotics from illegal online pharmacies is leading to antibiotic resistance**.

ASOP has a number of initiatives to raise awareness namely:

1. ASOP EU secured a Google educational AdWord grant to raise public awareness in 5 major countries in the EU. With over 35,000 first page impressions per day and a higher than average click through rate there is growing evidence of the campaign's effectiveness. Over 2300 responses have revealed behaviours ARE being changed.
2. ASOP EU has brought Member States and interested parties together having held 6 sharing best practice meetings and a meeting in the European Parliament to spread awareness on the implementation of the Falsified Medicines Directive safety features, including the EU Common Logo which obliges all Member States to allow "sales of medicines at a distance" - over the Internet – and so a seller of a medicine must register with their local regulatory authority. Under Article 85d of the Directive Member States are also obliged to inform the public about the purpose of the Common Logo which must appear on every page selling a medicine and the meaning of a falsified medicine. It is clear that many Member States are not fulfilling their obligation and so the meetings were held to share best practice and encourage this.

3. ASOP EU and Together against Cybercrime International (TaC) have teamed up to educate the youth of today about fake medicines by developing and evolving the Youth IGF Movement, a global movement that operates as a multi-stakeholder platform. Its mission is to inspire young people across the world to discuss and take a lead on Internet-governance related issues. We held the first meeting with young ambassadors two days ago at the Internet Governance Forum 2018, at UNESCO in Paris.

We all deserve access to safe medicines. Sales of medicines via illicit websites is a growing global problem that requires national and global solutions. **Education of the public to stem the demand is vital, this combined with close collaboration of all stakeholders** are critical success factors in solving the burden of AMR and the public health threat of falsified medicines.