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Facing Off Against Counterfeit Online Pharmacies: Pfizer Launches New Purchasing Website To Help Alleviate the Guesswork Around Buying Legitimate Viagra® (sildenafil citrate) Online

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(BUSINESS WIRE)--To meet the needs of consumers who are increasingly going online to purchase prescription medications, Pfizer today launched Viagra® home delivery, a new prescription-fulfillment website for Viagra® (sildenafil citrate) tablets, Pfizer's most counterfeited medicine. The site, which is powered by CVS/pharmacy and accessible through Viagra.com, offers men with erectile dysfunction (ED) an opportunity to purchase Viagra online (with a valid prescription) from a trusted source.

Fake online pharmacies and the products they sell are an escalating public health threat. While the number of online pharmacies has increased in recent years to meet consumer demand, a recent review by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) has shown that as few as 3 percent of websites selling prescription drugs are legitimate pharmacies, and up to half offer foreign or non-FDA-approved drugs.

"Through our ongoing analyses, we've seen how fake pharmacy websites can lure consumers into buying counterfeit medicines with what seems to be an easy purchasing experience, but it may be putting their health at risk," said Carmen Catizone, executive director of NABP. "We're pleased to see companies collaborating to develop and support solutions that will help patients obtain legitimate prescription medications online."

Pfizer's new Viagra home delivery online offering can be accessed through Viagra.com and includes comprehensive eCommerce functionality. With Viagra home delivery, men with ED can submit a new Viagra prescription or refill an existing one, estimate their co-pay in real-time, and check on the status of their order, from the privacy of their homes. Free standard shipping is available in the continental United States, and expedited shipping options are available for a charge. CVS/pharmacy will handle all of the back-end functions, including the authentication of all prescriptions. Its online pharmacy, CVS.com, has received accreditation from the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's VIPPS® (Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites®) program.

Another way to buy safely is to look for other Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites® (VIPPS®). To become VIPPS®-accredited, an online pharmacy must meet several privacy, security and quality-assurance requirements. Buying from a VIPPS®-accredited site will help ensure patients are getting legitimate medication and that personal health information is kept confidential.

"There are almost 24 million searches a year for Viagra online. By offering men with ED convenient access and a legitimate alternative to purchase Viagra online, our hope is that Pfizer will help rein in the distribution of fake

ED products," said Victor Clavelli, senior director, marketing group leader, Primary Care Business Unit.

The Risks of Fake Online Pharmacies and Counterfeit Medicines

With the proliferation of fake online pharmacies, it is important that consumers know which sites are legitimate. After a recent review of more than 10,000 Internet outlets selling prescription drugs, NABP listed almost 97 percent of the sites as "Not Recommended" because they did not appear to meet criteria for legitimate online pharmacies.

"When you look at the way these websites market themselves and the range of drugs that are commonly featured, it's almost as though the counterfeiters are targeting men and the health conditions that affect them," said Scott Williams, MPA, senior vice president, Men's Health Network, a national nonprofit organization committed to improving the health and well-being of men and their families. "Our organization is deeply concerned about the proliferation of fake medicines sold online, and we applaud any efforts to combat the scourge of counterfeit drugs."

Consumers recognize the difficulty in distinguishing between legitimate and fake pharmacies, yet they still may behave in ways that put them at risk of receiving counterfeit medicines. A 2011 national survey of 1,000 men with ED conducted by Harris Interactive, sponsored by NABP and Pfizer, found that more than 4 in 5 men (82 percent) believe it is difficult to determine if an online pharmacy is legitimate, yet more than 1 in 3 (36 percent) would consider purchasing ED medicines based on an online search.

"We have seen counterfeit medicines manufactured in filthy and deplorable conditions, yet some people do not realize the risks that this poses to their health and safety, our top priority," said Matthew Bassiur, vice president, Pfizer Global Security. "Counterfeit medicines often contain the wrong or incorrect levels of active ingredient, as well as potentially dangerous contaminants. Samples of counterfeit Viagra tested by our labs have contained pesticides, wallboard, commercial paint and printer ink. These findings motivate us to continue our aggressive global efforts to stop those who prey on unsuspecting patients."

In 2011, Pfizer Global Security evaluated 22 websites appearing in the top search results for the phrase "buy Viagra" and conducted chemical analysis of the pills advertised as Pfizer's Viagra that were ordered from these outlets. The study found that about 80 percent of these pills were counterfeit, and while the fake Viagra pills contained the active ingredient, sildenafil citrate, the amount was only 30 percent to 50 percent of what was advertised.

About Viagra (sildenafil citrate)

Viagra was the first oral ED medication, approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 1998. Viagra has been studied for more than 15 years in more than 136 completed and ongoing clinical trials involving more than 23,000 men with ED and has been proven to help many men, with all degrees of ED.

Important Safety Information

Do not take Viagra if you take nitrates, often prescribed for chest pain, as this may cause a sudden, unsafe drop in blood pressure.

Discuss your general health status with your doctor to ensure that you are healthy enough to engage in sexual activity. If you experience chest pain, nausea, or any other discomforts during sex, seek immediate medical help.

In the rare event of an erection lasting more than 4 hours, seek immediate medical help to avoid long-term injury.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of Viagra. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25 mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of Viagra in a 48-hour period.

In rare instances, men taking PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicines, including Viagra) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision, stop taking PDE5 inhibitors, including Viagra, and call a doctor right away.

Sudden decrease or loss of hearing has been rarely reported in people taking PDE5 inhibitors, including Viagra. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to the PDE5 inhibitors or to other factors. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of hearing, stop taking Viagra and contact a doctor right away.

If you have prostate problems or high blood pressure for which you take medicines called alpha blockers, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of Viagra.

Viagra should not be used with other treatments that cause erections. Viagra should not be used with Revatio as Revatio contains sildenafil, the same medicine found in Viagra.

Viagra does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

The most common side effects of Viagra are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less commonly, bluish vision, blurred vision, or sensitivity to light may briefly occur.

For patient insert and full prescribing information for Viagra, click here.

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This press release has an accompanying Smart Marketing Page providing further details about the organization, products and services introduced above. You can access the Smart Marketing Page via the following link: URL: http://smp.businesswire.com/pages/facing-against-counterfeit-online-pharmacies.

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