

IMPORTATION OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

HDMA's Position

HDMA is opposed to permitting the commercial or personal importation of pharmaceuticals into the United States. Importation, whether restricted to Canada or a select list of other countries, significantly increases the likelihood of counterfeit or adulterated prescription medicines entering the U.S. marketplace and places U.S. patients at risk.

Issue

The Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 budget includes a provision to allow individuals to hand carry a 90-day supply of a prescription drug from Canada, excluding controlled substances and biologics. The same provision existed under the Homeland Security FY 2010 budget.

However, patients can be placed at risk due to the presence of counterfeits in other countries and the fact that Internet purchasing often hides the true origin of products. For example, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 30 percent of prescription medicines can be counterfeit in many Latin American, African and Asian countries. The WHO also found that purchases from illegal Internet sites are counterfeit more than half the time.

In the United States, 87 percent of prescription medicines sold are stored, managed and delivered by HDMA member companies. HDMA members serve as a vital link in the healthcare supply chain by ensuring product integrity and providing the highest-quality medicines and services, ensuring that costs are as low as possible and enabling providers to deliver care more effectively to patients. Patient safety and product integrity will suffer as a result of prescription medicine importation.

Additional Information

- HDMA does not support commercial importation of medicines whether by wholesale distribution companies, pharmacists or individuals.
- Limiting personal or commercial importation from a specific country or countries does not diminish the likelihood of counterfeit or adulterated drugs entering the U.S., nor will it assure significant reductions in the costs of prescription drugs.
- HDMA members have serious concerns that imported prescription medicines may not have been properly stored and handled, and that they may have been tampered with or mislabeled.

The Healthcare Distribution Management Association (HDMA) is the national association representing primary healthcare distributors, the vital link between the nation's pharmaceutical manufacturers and healthcare providers. Each business day, HDMA member companies ensure that nearly nine million prescription medicines and healthcare products are delivered safely and efficiently to nearly 200,000 pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics and others nationwide. HDMA and its members work daily to provide value and achieve cost savings, an estimated \$42 billion each year to our nation's healthcare system. For more information, visit www.HealthcareDistribution.org.

