European Association of Euro-Pharmaceutical Companies

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PARALLEL DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICINES IS SAFE

The parallel distribution of medicines in Europe is absolutely safe, and parallel distributors are determined to make sure it remains that way. To underscore this commitment, the European Association of Euro-Pharmaceutical Companies (EAEPC) today launched its Good Parallel Distribution Practice Guidelines for Medicinal Products, by which all of its members abide and which reaffirm the various European and national requirements governing parallel distribution within the European Economic Area.

"Parallel distributors operate in full compliance with the highest quality and safety standards," said Tomasz Dzitko, Chairman of the EAEPC's Regulatory Affairs Working Group. "With the Good Parallel Distribution Practice Guidelines we are sending a strong signal that we are serious about patient safety and committed to do our part."

From 21 to 23 September 2005, the EAEPC will participate in the "Counteract the Counterfeiters" Seminar organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in order to exchange ideas with other distributors, manufacturers, government officials and regulators on how to improve supply chain safety. "Europe's parallel distributors have an excellent safety record and we look forward to explaining how our members go about ensuring product quality and safety," said Dr. Heinz Kobelt, Secretary-General of the EAEPC. "The threat to patients posed by fake medicines requires an industry-wide response," he added.

Along with the Good Parallel Distribution Practice Guidelines, the EAEPC today released a background paper outlining its official policy regarding counterfeits. The paper explains how parallel distribution is highly regulated and effectively adds an additional layer of product controls as medicines undergo quality checks before re-labelling or repackaging.

Although intra-European parallel distribution has not been an entry point for counterfeit medicines into the legitimate supply chain, the EAEPC is strengthening its engagement in the intra-industry and public debate surrounding the issue of counterfeit drugs. Dr. Kobelt pointed out that "in the past, certain manufacturers have repeatedly abused this debate to label parallel distribution as an easy entry point for counterfeits. Such accusations are completely unfounded and not helpful at all when the real motive driving them is to attack legitimate competitors and not to ensure patient safety."

The EAEPC is confident that the Council of Europe seminar will help to build trust and facilitate co-operation between the various market players and public bodies involved.

Notes to Editors

- The European Association of Euro-Pharmaceutical Companies (EAEPC) is the representative voice of pharmaceutical parallel distribution in Europe. Through national association or individual company membership it encompasses over 70 firms from 17 countries in the European Economic Area (EEA).

- The EAEPC's primary aims are to safeguard the free movement of medicines, as laid down in the EU treaty, and to counteract any attempts to restrict the freedom of choice for the consumer through trading patterns in breach of European competition law. The Association believes that free trade will lead to improvements in health standards through the provision of innovative medicines at lower cost, benefiting statutory healthcare systems, other third-party payers, and the public as both patients and taxpayers, as well as assisting the EU to achieve its objective of a single, internal market.

- All products handled by EAEPC members have EU or national regulatory approval, are 100% safe and are exclusively sourced from and sold to EEA countries using authorised channels.

- The study 'Benefits to Payers and Patients from Parallel Trade' was conducted by York Health Economics Consortium in the UK. A copy of the report's executive summary is available on-line at www.yhec.co.uk

- For further information visit http://www.eaepc.org