



United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

Middle School
Sept 2018

Original: English

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime: The Commission of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Committee History

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, UNODC operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices. UNODC relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from Governments, for 90 per cent of its budget.

The Commission acts as the governing body of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It approves the budget of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Fund, which provides resources for promoting technical assistance in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice worldwide.

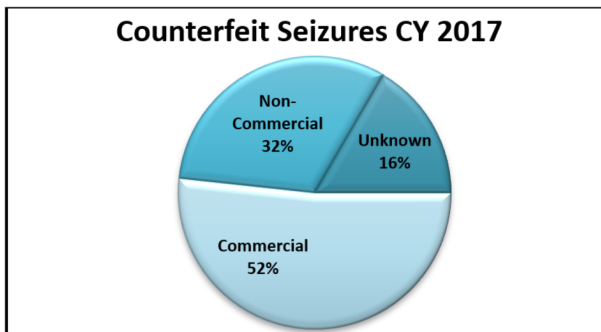
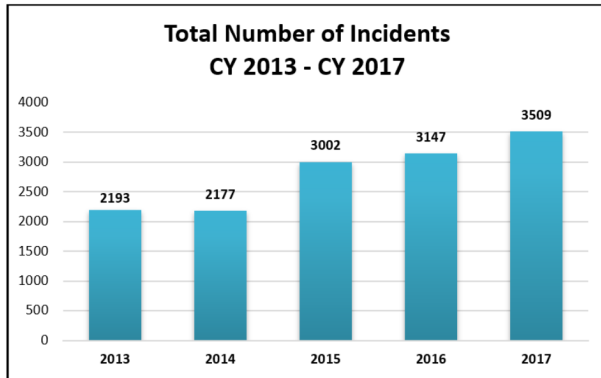
The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) is part of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It focuses on transnational crime and criminal justice. In the early 1990s, the UN developed a greater interest in criminal justice policy, which led to the creation of the CCPCJ. When the CCPCJ was created, a similar older committee (called the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control) was removed. This was done in order to put more focus on the CCPCJ and make sure that UN agencies would coordinate well with each other.

Preventing the Distribution of Fake Medicines

History

Fake medicine is a major criminal industry, and it is a growing public health crisis around the world. Fake medicine can include counterfeit, falsified, and substandard medication. Counterfeit and falsified medication refers to medical products that purposely lie about their identity, composition, or source. Substandard medicines are legal products, but they have expired, inactive, or low-quality ingredients that can harm people.

The consumers that unknowingly use these harmful medicines have their health put at risk. The extent of the negative side-effects from fake medicines can include psychological and physical damage and can sometimes lead to death. This is because fake medicines often include harmful additives. These additives can be dangerous on their own, or they might react to other medicines the consumer is using with



dangerous side-effects. Additionally, substandard medications are just as dangerous because they may not actually treat the illness for which they are intended. Consumers may not realize this, and their conditions may become worse as they continue to take the substandard medicine.

All consumers of pharmaceuticals are equally vulnerable to the covert operations of fake medicine. However, fake medicine is significantly more common in developing countries than developed countries. Additionally, developing countries may not have healthcare that is widely available, making it more difficult for fake medicines to be stopped and prevented. Others may actually be incentivized to purchase counterfeit and fraudulent life-saving medications for diseases, such as malaria, when the legal versions are especially expensive or hard to find. Meanwhile, in higher-income countries where there are national regulations, counterfeit medications are likely to be copies of well-known brands that at least contain some sort of active or alternative ingredient.

Producers of fake medicine rely on deceptive packaging to trick consumers into believing that they are acquiring the real product. In the past ten years, pharmaceutical companies that make medicines have taken steps to develop safeguards and precautions on packaging to prevent fake versions. These companies have also been adding both visible and concealed security features, such as hologram labels and brand protection features. When pharmaceutical products cross borders and travel through various countries and distributors, repackaging often takes place. However, this allows counterfeiters additional opportunities to forge packaging information and introduce their counterfeit products into supply channels.

Recent Developments

Organized crime groups have used technology to improve the efficiency of their operations. For example, criminals can now use online pharmacies as a new way to sell fake medicine to unsuspecting consumers. Online pharmacies are a relatively new innovation, developed in the 1990s to make getting prescription drugs more convenient. They also make it possible for people to be independent. If a person has a disease that makes going out to a pharmacy difficult, an online pharmacy can provide that person with independence and can even deliver the medicine. However, criminal groups take advantage of this technology to reach new victims, avoid detection by law enforcement, and undercut prices. As online pharmacies grew, so too did fraudulent ones, seeking to take advantage of the innovative arrangement of purchasing prescription medication.

While counterfeits are incredibly profitable for criminal groups, they have a severely negative impact on pharmaceutical companies. Fake medicines are estimated to cost legitimate pharmaceutical companies an estimated \$46 billion annually in profit. This is largely because of lost sales. This loss also has the effect of reducing investments into new medicines. Pharmaceutical companies use the profits earned from selling current medicines to fund their research into new medicines and having such large amounts of lost sales means there is less money available for this research. Therefore, the problem of counterfeit producers creates financial difficulty for pharmaceutical companies.

Treaties and Agreements

Currently, the World Health Organization (WHO) is considered the main international organization in the fight against fake medicine. The WHO plays many roles in this way, such as facilitating collaboration between countries where fake medicines are being trafficked and leading public campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers of fake medicine.

There are some regional agreements regarding fake medicine, and they are similar to trade agreements. For example, many European Countries have signed the MEDICRIME Convention to standardize laws on the production and transportation of fake medicine. This also creates new ways for countries to collaborate and communicate about ongoing investigations into various groups. However, given that the trade of fake medicine is global in nature, these types of agreements struggle to counteract fake medicine that travels into or out of these specific collaboration regions. This, in turn, has led many people and pharmaceutical companies to advocate for the adoption of one specific, global convention on fake and counterfeit medicines.

Guiding Questions

- Who pays for healthcare in your country?
- How readily available is healthcare in your country?
- Which government agency regulates pharmaceuticals in your country? Is this agency effective at its job?
- Does your country have any regulations in place to prevent the distribution of falsified or counterfeit medicine?
- Does your country provide any information to its citizens about how to ensure they are buying legitimate medicines?
- Are there any diseases that are particularly widespread in your country? If so, could these diseases have an impact on healthcare costs and the presence and distribution of fake medicine?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bate, Roger. "The Deadly World of Fake Medicine." *CNN*, 17 July 2012. Accessed 20 June 2018.

Excellent article providing an overview of the negative effects of fake medicine on the world.

<https://www.cnn.com/2012/07/17/health/living-well/falsified-medicine-bate/index.html>.

This article about the dangers of fraudulent and counterfeit medicine explores some of the history behind terrorist groups and their link to pharmaceutical crimes.

"Growing Threat from Counterfeit Medicines." *World Health Organization*. Last modified April 2010.

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/4/10-020410/en/>.

This webpage from the World Health Organization details certain crucial events that led to the recognition of fraudulent medicine as a major international issue, and it illuminates statistics that aid in the introduction of the topic.

Council of Europe. "MEDICRIME Convention." Council of Europe, n.d.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/medicrime/home>.

This is the Council of Europe's website addressing the MEDICRIME Convention, including the text of the convention and a useful factsheet with a brief overview.

"Pharmaceutical Industry Initiative to Combat Crime." *INTERPOL*. <https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Pharmaceutical-crime/Pharmaceutical-Industry-Initiative-to-Combat-Crime>.

This webpage from Interpol details information on a partnership between itself and pharmaceutical companies in order to combat the threat of fraudulent medicine.

"Substandard and Falsified Medical Products." *World Health Organization*. Last modified 31 January 2018.

<http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/substandard-and-falsified-medical-products>.

This webpage from the World Health Organization helps to define some of the terms and key facts pertinent to the issue of fraudulent medicine, as well as to provide information on ways to identify illegal and unregulated medical products.