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NAFDAC Clamps Down on Manufacturers of Antibiotics, Anti-malarials without Mobile Authentication

06 Jul 2014

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NAFDAC logo

By Paul Obi in Abuja

In a swift reaction to the abuse of its regulatory powers, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) yesterday clamped down on manufacturers of antibiotics and anti-malarials, whose products are yet to adopt the agency's Mobile Authentication Service (MAS) to detect counterfeits.

Director-General of NAFDAC, Dr. Paul Orhii, said there was no going back on enforcement of compliance with the MAS deadline, which has previously been shifted twice in the last three years due to the plea for more time by segments of the pharmaceutical industry and other key players.

Orhii said NAFDAC has the full support of the President and Minister of Health, Prof. Onyebuchi Chukwu, to enforce implementation of the service in a bid to eradicate counterfeit drugs in the country.

He disclosed that firm instruction has been given to all NAFDAC offices across the country to go round various pharmaceutical outlets to enforce compliance as deadline is irreversible and sacrosanct.

According to him, the scratch and text service (MAS) has put the power of detecting counterfeit drugs in the hands of over 100 million mobile phone users in the country.

The Director-General said the international community was full of commendation for Nigeria for pioneering the use of cutting-edge technologies

MAS, a technology pioneered by NAFDAC, requires drug manufacturers to install a scratch panel on their drug packaging concealing a PIN number that consumers can text to short codes to ascertain and verify the drug's authenticity and genuineness notwithstanding its registration number from NAFDAC.

During the operation and clampdown process, NAFDAC officials sealed off batches of antibiotics and anti-malarials in pharmacies and other pharmaceutical facilities in Abuja and environs during the week after the drugs were taken to market without installation of the scratch panel. According to NAFDAC's Director of Pharmacovigilance and Post-Marketing Surveillance, Andeline Osakwe, the MAS policy provides that drug shops have 30 days to ensure affected manufacturers come forward.

"The owners themselves have 90 working days to ensure these products are fixed with MAS codes. These are products we have registered, but we do know a lot of things happen along with them. Even when products are registered and in the market, people do at times counterfeit the product and affix NAFDAC numbers. The MAS code is mobile technology based system we have brought to reinforce that securing of the product with the NAFDAC number," Osakwe observed.

She maintained that "the MAS code will let the consumer know that the product is coming from the source stated on the package. If the code is not there and it has a NAFDAC number, you may not know whether it is a counterfeited NAFDAC or whether it is actually genuine."

The policy stipulates that manufacturers are mandated to first get NAFDAC numbers before they are able to affix MAS codes, which are provided by an of five service providers, to which drug buyers can send GSM codes even before they pay for their purchase at any pharmacy facility.

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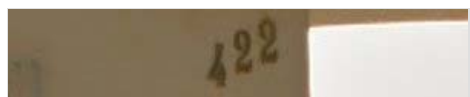
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