Definitions

Differentiating the different types of poor quality medications is important because causes and remedies differ.

Substandard

Genuine drug products which do not meet the required quality specifications.

Degraded

Drugs that have deteriorated after production due to inadequate storage.

Falsified

A medicine deliberately and fraudulently mislabelled with respect to identity or source.

Image: Patricia Tabernero

The World Health Organization's Medical Product Alerts system provides details of poor quality medicines.

For the latest alerts visit:
who.int/medicines/publications/drugalerts/en/

IDDO
INFECTIOUS DISEASES DATA OBSERVATORY

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Medicine quality and the fight against infectious diseases

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Preserving vital medicines

The global health community has made significant progress in combatting a range of infectious diseases. However, poor quality medicines – falsified, substandard and degraded - are a major danger to global health and threaten the progress made.

Poor quality medicines may contain the incorrect amount of ingredients, no active ingredients at all or sometimes the wrong ingredients. The consequences include prolonged sickness, treatment failure, side effects, loss of income, increased healthcare costs, and death. Inadequate dosing can also act as a driver of resistance to antimicrobial medicines, so that vital medicines may no longer work when we need them.

Data on the distribution and consequences of poor quality medicines are scattered and often misinterpreted. There are significant gaps in our knowledge; many countries have inadequate surveillance systems, making it hard to assess the scale of the problem. Furthermore, those producing falsified medicines are using increasingly sophisticated techniques, making detection more difficult.

The Infectious Diseases Data Observatory (IDDO)

IDDO's Medicine Quality Scientific Group tackles life-saving public health issues by sharing expertise and collating information to increase our understanding of the prevalence and distribution of poor quality medicines around the world.

IDDO encourages discussion of the epidemiology of poor quality medicines, and their detection and prevention. IDDO advocates for fair access to good quality essential medicines, greater investment in the regulation of medicine distribution, and changes to clinical trial guidelines to assure the quality of the medical products used.

The IDDO Medicine Quality Scientific Group aims to:

- Develop an open access data-sharing platform for the medicine quality community
- Facilitate improvements in the quantity and quality of data
- Summarise and visualise data for ease of access by regulatory authorities and policy makers
- Evaluate devices and techniques that help to detect poor quality medicines
- Improve the standardisation of medicine quality data to allow comparison between countries and regions
- Understand and reduce the impact of poor quality medicines on patient health and the spread of drug resistance.

The Medicine Quality Surveyor

IDDO's **Medicine Quality Surveyor** is an online tool that maps and summarises published reports about the quality of a range of anti-infective medicines. It identifies and brings together disparate information by summarising medicine quality reports describing the quality of medicines, techniques, assays and sampling – over time and by location.

IDDO medicine quality projects

Database development – We are creating an accessible data-sharing system for reports on the quality of the world's most important essential medicines. This will enable us to make crucial evidence available to policy makers and regulatory authorities, and allow us to measure the impact of poor quality medicines on patients and antimicrobial resistance.

Literature reviews – We are undertaking comprehensive literature reviews to identify gaps in medicine quality information and assess trends over time. These reviews cover medicines used to treat diabetes, HIV, malaria, TB and bacterial infections, as well as veterinary medicines and medicines used for maternal health.

Device evaluation – We are working with a range of private and public sector partners to evaluate the diagnostic accuracy, ease of use and cost-effectiveness of a variety of devices and techniques used to determine the quality of medicines.

Education and training – We help to deliver an annual short course on the quality of medical products, aimed at those working in regulatory bodies, health decision and funding agencies, international health organisations, academia and the pharmaceutical industries.

The Medicine Quality team is working with partners to host the first international conference on 'Medicine Quality & Public Health'. This will be held in September 2018, in Oxford, UK.

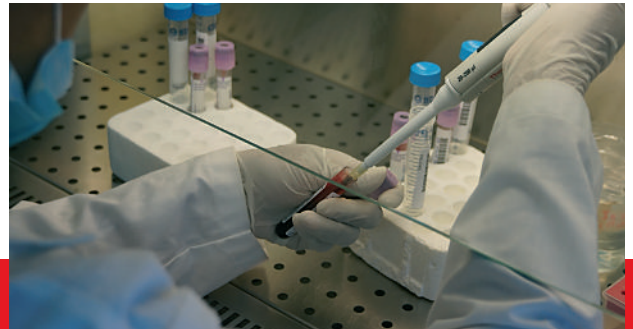

Image: Mehul Dhorda