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INTERPOL will help SE Asia to fight counterfeit drugs

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INTERPOL to help SE Asia in fighting counterfeit drugs



Singapore: Representatives from healthcare agencies and enforcement organizations throughout the greater mekong sub-region (GMS) convened in Bangkok for the inaugural meeting of BREMERE in order to create a mechanism for information-sharing about counterfeit and substandard medicines.

BREMERE, which stands for 'Building Regional Expertise in Medicines Regulation, Information Sharing, Joint Investigation and Enforcement', can support joint investigations and promote collective enforcement actions within and among countries. The BREMERE forum in Bangkok was initiated by the Promoting the Quality of Medicines (PQM) program, implemented by the US pharmacopeial convention (USP) with funding support by the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) through the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Despite efforts by numerous organizations and programs to thwart the proliferation of poor-quality medicines, counterfeit and substandard medicines remain a high-priority concern that threatens public health in Southeast Asia. To address this, participation by medicines regulatory authorities, police, customs agencies, prosecutors and organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the US Department of State form the framework for BREMERE.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, Dr Kennedy M Chibwe, senior program advisor for PQM, stated, "BREMERE represents an important step in joint efforts in the GMS aimed directly at combating the scourge of counterfeit and substandard medicines."

PQM's work with regulatory agencies and ministries of health has shown that evidence-based data on poor-quality medicines collected from the field in each country in the GMS has been useful for supporting administrative and regulatory actions by country law enforcement agencies. Through the establishment of BREMERE, PQM and its partners hope to create a mechanism for sustained regional and inter-sector communications that helps protect the supply and distribution of medicines within individual countries and across borders in the GMS.