

## **Pharmacists must help root out fake drugs from the sector...Public Health Minister Volda Lawrence**

**(MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH-GEORGETOWN)** – **FAKE** drugs must be rooted out from the local market and Public Health Minister Volda Lawrence Sunday called on recently-qualified pharmacists to join the government in the battle.



Speaking at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Pharmacy Convention held Sunday at the Pegasus Hotel Guyana, Kingston, Georgetown, Minister Lawrence reminded the audience that phoney drugs, medicines and pharmaceuticals comprise some 10 percent of exports to the sub-sector in low and middle-income countries.

With the burgeoning of counterfeit drugs globally, Lawrence reiterated the need for greater ‘pharmacovigilance’ among local healthcare practitioners to help spot and remove the bogus items from the supply chain of the local market.

“Failure to do so will compromise your integrity and defeat your purpose as medicines experts. Keep your ears attuned to complaints of medication not working effectively, presentation of adverse effects, investigate and help monitor the performance of drugs. Verify if the certificates of authorisation are in place. Give support to the GA-FDD” (Government Analyst Food and Drugs Department), she counselled.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Pharmacy Convention was held under the theme **‘Pharmacist: Your Medicines Experts, Bridging the Gap for Quality Health Care’** and was organised by the Guyana Pharmacists’ Association.

It drew some 200 participants representing the private and public sector pharmacies, University of Guyana (UG) students and the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH).

During her keynote address, Minister Lawrence examined the rationale behind the World Health Organisation (WHO) 2013 launch of the Global Surveillance and Monitoring system, reminding listeners it was to encourage countries to report falsified medical products in order to help develop a more accurate and validated assessment of the emerging and troubling problem.

“You as medicine experts are cognisant of the risks and dangers to health with the use of substandard and falsified drugs which continue to find their way into the local markets. You know how detrimental to health these are and the threat it poses to healthcare delivery. Use your expertise to impact positively, so that the abuse of medicines and drugs can be kept at a minimum and our citizens can be protected from the use of falsified medication. The whole question of fake medicines is not only a global/regional issue but one that is right in our backyard”, Lawrence said.

As a consequence, the GA-FDD in collaboration with the Regional Medicine Surveillance Department in Jamaica will conduct an assessment on Guyana’s medical industry in a bid to crackdown on pharmaceutical fraud in the local market and to help bolster patients’ safety.

“The patients’ expectation of you as a pharmacist expands far beyond the product-oriented functions of distributing and dispensing medicines and health supplies. You are considered and seen as the main care-provider, as a counsellor, as an adviser, depending on the scenario”, Lawrence reminded the pharmacists.

In the health sector’s pecking order, pharmacists usually play second fiddle to physicians being lost sometimes in the shadows of anonymity. But Lawrence challenged them to find creative ways to overcome these challenges.

“You have earned the right to be recognised as qualified practitioners as you now possess the requisite expertise and knowledge to influence the way pharmaceutical care evolves in our country. You are the trustees of the array of safe and effective medicines that would allow our citizens to derive optimum benefits from their use. I urge you therefore to use this responsibility with dignity, professionalism and ethical fortitude”, Minister Lawrence said.

Meanwhile, GPA's President, Ms. Rosana Narine, reminded participants of their key role in providing health and pharmaceutical care to the Guyanese public.

“Pharmacists are experts in medicines and use their clinical expertise, together with formulation, quality-control, practical knowledge, to ensure the safe supply and use of medicines by public”, Narine said.



Dr. Karishma Jeeboo receiving her award  
from GPA's President- Ms. Rosana

Meanwhile, Dr. Karishma Jeeboo, who recently graduated as a doctor of pharmacy from the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto, Canada, received the GPA Special Recognition Award while Mr Carl Bacchus was bestowed the Caribbean Association of Pharmacists Life Membership Award.

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