FDA Warns of Illegal H1N1 Drugs Sold Online

October 16, 2009

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on October 15 warned consumers to avoid purchasing any products over the Internet that claim to diagnose, prevent, treat or cure the H1N1 (swine flu) virus. The FDA issued the warning after purchasing and analyzing products represented online as Tamiflu (oseltamivir), which might prove dangerous to consumers.

When analyzed, the so-called Tamiflu tablets—postmarked from India—were found to contain talc and acetaminophen, but no traces of the active ingredient oseltamivir. At the same time, the FDA purchased four other products from other sites that sellers claimed to diagnose, prevent, treat or cure H1N1.

While the H1N1 drug products contained various amounts of oseltamivir, they were not approved for use in the United States and many of them did not require a prescription from a health professional.

The FDA urges consumers to only purchase FDA-approved products from licensed pharmacies. The two drugs approved by the agency to treat and prevent H1N1 are Tamiflu and Relenza (zanamivir).

While people living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic conditions—such as heart disease, asthma and diabetes—are believed to face a higher risk of symptoms if exposed to seasonal influenza, it is not yet clear if HIV-positive people are more likely to become severely ill if exposed to H1N1.

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