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Analysis of consumer's awareness and response toward counterfeit medicines in Tanzania

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The problem of fake and counterfeit drugs is real and constitutes a major threat to the health and safety of the Tanzania population. Moreover, future investment in pharmaceutical products is placed at risk from the unfair competition generated by counterfeit drugs. A study was designed to examine consumers' awareness of the problem. The study further examined how consumers respond to the problem of counterfeit drugs in Tanzania. A cross section of consumers in Dar es Salaam city was surveyed. The data were collected through written questionnaires, documentary reviews and interviews. The response rate was 99%. Results show that 94 percent of the respondents agreed that there is a fake and counterfeit drug problem in Tanzania and (84.8%) considered this a major problem. However, the results of the study indicate that the public is occasionally informed or alerted of the existence of counterfeit drugs. The findings also indicate that the consumers try to assure themselves of the quality of the drugs they purchase by use of several visual security techniques. However, no rigorous effort is taken to confirm as well as report suspected counterfeit drugs to regulatory agency. Most of consumers do not know if the authority exists and those who know it do not know how to report. The results of the study evidence the existence of four main problems. These include lack of adequate attention and public health warnings relative to the scale of counterfeit drugs problem, incomplete and/or irrelevant information about drugs provided by drug retailers, inability of consumers to locate and manipulate information on labels equally well and lack of rigorous effort in confirming and reporting suspected counterfeit drugs. In view of these problems, the problem of counterfeit drugs still needs devoted attention and seriousness in terms of regulatory processes, awareness raising campaign, public involvement and government support.