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THEFTS OF MEDICINES: AN OUTLINE OF THE PHENOMENON

Domenico Di Giorgio, AIFA

Background

Since 2013 in Italy an exponential growth in the phenomenon of thefts of medicines has been observed. As the management of the investigation on thefts is carried out at local level and complaints are filed with various local police forces, there has been a urge for centralization of data on the phenomenon, which would enhance the execution of a thorough analysis.

The network of the stakeholders

AIFA (Product Quality and Counterfeiting Office, UQP&C) has initiated the development of a **system for collecting, managing and sharing of data** on the phenomenon of thefts of medicines.

In the project were initially involved all the stakeholders most directly concerned, namely the marketing authorization holders (MAH) and the Warehouse Service Providers (depositories), which were asked to share the data available on events of theft.

The involvement of trade associations, whose contribution facilitated the awareness raising of marketing authorization holders and Warehouse Service Providers, has been decisive. The main interlocutors were *Farmindustria* (association of pharmaceutical companies, which represents about 200 companies), *ASSORAM* the National Association of traders and logistics of the primary distribution of pharmaceutical products for human use (as well as veterinary, parapharmaceutical, medical devices and sanitary goods) and later *Assogenerici*, National Association of industries of generic drugs, which represents over 50 pharmaceutical companies and, finally, the *national association of wholesalers*.

Currently, about **80** companies or pharmaceutical groups are registered in the AIFA platform. The MAHs currently involved in the project cover approximately **49%** of the whole medicinal products authorized in Italy and include, in particular, **7 out of the 13** companies holding more than one hundred products each.

The project also involved the **Italian Ministry of Health**, responsible for monitoring the distribution and for the tracking system ("track and trace") and the **Comando Carabinieri per la tutela della salute - NAS**, a police force in charge of specialized investigative health-related tasks and judiciary police activities in various sectors, including healthcare.

Data collection

With the aim of simplifying as much as possible the activities of data collection, it was agreed in the operational stage to use a **standard form ("thefts report form") to be sent**, once compiled by the MAH/ Warehouse Service Provider / Wholesaler, **to a dedicated e-mail address**.

The system actually replicated the format according to which, on the basis of the regulations in force, MAHs and distributors are mandatorily required to report any case of theft to the tracking system of the Ministry of Health.

The information requested on the form are strictly necessary to identify the event and the product stolen (or lost) and include, in particular, the Marketing Authorisation Number.

Managing of data

The data reported in the form are extracted and transferred in the **Database on Thefts**.

Through the Marketing Authorisation Number relations can be established with the **AIFA Database on Medicines authorized in Italy**. This allows to integrate the data reported on the form (name and Marketing Authorisation Number) with the main characteristics of the product.

Developments

In the framework of Fakeshare II the Database on Thefts has been extended to the other Countries involved in the Project through an ad hoc Database which allows the gathering and sharing of data.