

# **RCMP PRESS RELEASE**

**CANADA**

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## **RCMP seizes counterfeit heart medication at Hamilton pharmacy**

Yesterday, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Greater Toronto Area Federal Enforcement Section executed a search warrant at King West Pharmacy at King Street West in Hamilton in connection with an on-going criminal investigation into the sale of a counterfeit heart medication.

Seized during the search was a quantity of counterfeit Norvasc.

Norvasc®, produced by Pfizer, is indicated for the treatment of hypertension, chronic stable angina and confirmed or suspected vasospastic angina. The authentic Norvasc® 5 mg is a white octagonal tablet, scored, debossed on one face as "NRV5" with "Pfizer" on the opposite face. The authentic Norvasc® 10 mg is a white octagonal tablet, debossed on one face as "NRV10" with "Pfizer" on the opposite face.

"The main reason for conducting this search was to immediately remove the counterfeit medication from the store and from sale to the public," said RCMP Constable Judy Laurence of the Greater Toronto Area Federal Enforcement Section, "Our major concern is for the safety of the consumer."

"This is the first search warrant that the RCMP has executed in the Greater Toronto and surrounding area in connection with counterfeit medication," added Constable Laurence. "What is very disturbing is that the RCMP is beginning to see a general trend in this type of crime where medication is being passed off to the public under legitimate brand names when in fact they are cheap "knock-offs, some with very little or no medicinal ingredients."

"If you are a patient with a Norvasc® prescription from King West Pharmacy, please visit a pharmacy of your choice to verify that your Norvasc® tablets are authentic," said Deanna Williams, Registrar of the Ontario College of Pharmacists. "If necessary, the pharmacist will assist you in obtaining a new prescription. Other patients of this pharmacy, who have prescriptions on file at King West Pharmacy and need a refill should also visit a pharmacy for assistance.

"We are also working with pharmacists and physicians in the Hamilton area to make sure these patients receive immediate and proper care," Williams added. Along with assisting the RCMP in their investigation, the Ontario College of Pharmacists is conducting its own investigation of the pharmacy. The College regulates both the pharmacist and the pharmacy, and concerns about patient safety and operations of this pharmacy have prompted this investigation.

Concerned patients of this pharmacy may contact the Ontario College of Pharmacists at 1-800-220-1921. Additionally, information for all Ontario patients will be maintained at website [www.worthknowing.ca](http://www.worthknowing.ca).

According to Frank Monteleone, Vice President Legal Affairs at Pfizer Canada, "This investigation serves as a sober reminder that even the world's safest pharmaceutical distribution systems are being challenged. Counterfeiting is a serious and growing global concern that can pose significant health risks for patients. We're pleased to work with the RCMP to address the potential counterfeiting of our products so that Canadians can remain confident that the Pfizer medicines they purchase are authentic, safe and effective. If patients have any concerns with our products, they can call the Pfizer medical information line at 1-800-463-6001 during regular business hours to speak to a qualified professional."

The investigation continues and charges are pending.

One of the mandates of the RCMP Federal Enforcement Section is Consumer Protection.

Among the more than 150 Federal Statutes for which this section is responsible are the Radiocommunications Act; the Copyright Act; and the Criminal Code of Canada. The RCMP Federal Enforcement Section's priorities focus on investigating organized crime involvement in counterfeit goods at the manufacturing, importation and commercial wholesale levels.

Established in 1871, The Ontario College of Pharmacists regulates and licenses all Ontario pharmacists and accredits all community pharmacies. Pharmacy, as a self-regulated profession, is one of 23 regulated health professions in Ontario regulated by its college, and is established to oversee the profession under the Regulated Health Professions Act. The College's primary role is to ensure pharmacists provide Ontarians with high quality, ethical pharmaceutical care. It sets the requirements to enter pharmacy practice, establishes and enforces the profession's standards of practice and ethics, and ensures the continuing competence of pharmacists. It also sets the rules and standards for operating a community pharmacy.

[http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/on/press/2005/2005\\_jun\\_16\\_e.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/on/press/2005/2005_jun_16_e.htm)