

Botswana gets mobile compact lab to detect counterfeit medicines

Global Pharma Health Fund (GPHF), a charitable initiative funded by Merck, which fights counterfeit medicines, has donated a mobile compact laboratory to the Botswana Health Ministry in Gaborone to help detect counterfeit medicines.



Mobile compact lab to detect counterfeit medicines presented to Botswana.

The 'Minilab' can be used to identify inferior and counterfeit medicines rapidly and reliably. The Minilab is worth around BP45,254 (approx. €4,000).

"Counterfeit medicines pose a serious threat to public health globally and here in Botswana," said Minister of Health, Dorcas Makgato-Malesu. The International Police Organization (Interpol) estimates that up to 30% of all medicines in Africa are either counterfeit or of inferior quality.

Kai Beckmann, member of the Merck Executive Board, explained, "The mobile compact laboratories are globally unique for their ability to detect counterfeits quickly, cost-efficiently and reliably. With them, one can relieve bottlenecks in quality control for medicines, especially in rural areas. In addition, we are helping to improve the structures for drug monitoring and ensuring that scarce resources are not wasted on worthless, and even hazardous, medicines."

The Minilab consists of two portable and tropic-resistant suitcases that contain the means to detect inferior or ineffective

medicines. It offers quick, simple and low-cost test methods to check medicines for external abnormalities, identity and content, and identifies 75 active pharmaceutical ingredients, particularly those in medicines commonly used against infectious diseases. The test methods include those for common antibiotics, anthelmintics, virustatics, anti-malarial medicines, tuberculostatics and other medicines.

To date, the GPHF has supplied over 700 Minilabs at cost, to more than 90 countries. More than half of these countries are located in Africa. The combination of a simple, reliable test set for onsite testing and a manual with detailed instructions on performing the test is unique. Merck continues to participate in external research with the aim of increasing the number of medicines that can be tested as well as to discover other possibilities for optimising the Minilab. Training is also offered to ensure that the users are familiar with the test procedure.

The Group's Executive Board is visiting 10 African countries this week to underscore its commitment and rising importance of the continent. Among others, Merck seeks to start local production diabetes treatment in Algeria, inaugurate an office in Nigeria and start the sale of its Muse® Auto CD4/CD4% System to detect HIV.

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