

## Singapore: HSA Alerts Public to Two Illegal Products Containing Potent Undeclared Ingredients, Including the Banned Chemical Sibutramine

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public to two illegal health products available locally and tested to contain potent, undeclared ingredients, including sibutramine, a prescription medicine that was disallowed for sale in Singapore since 2010, due to serious safety concerns. The two products are:

PRODUCT	UNDECLARED INGREDIENTS FOUND
<i>'Li Da DAIDAIHUA Weight Loss Capsule'</i>	Sibutramine, Benzyl Sibutramine
<i>'Du Zhong Jin Gu Wan'</i> <i>'杜仲筋骨丸'</i>	Chlorpheniramine, Dexamethasone and Diclofenac

'Li Da DAIDAIHUA Weight Loss Capsule', which claimed to be 100% herbal, was sold through the Internet, while 'Du Zhong Jin Gu Wan' was purchased by a woman in her 70s for joint pains from an acquaintance. HSA was alerted to these products by the public and a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioner respectively. The TCM practitioner became concerned after his patient reported immediate pain relief from consuming 'Du Zhong Jin Gu Wan'.

Although HSA has not received any adverse reaction reports associated with the two products, there may be unreported cases of consumers who experienced possible adverse effects without realising that they were caused by these products. They may also not have informed their doctors that they had taken these products. As illegal health products are generally produced under poor manufacturing conditions with no quality control and the contents of the products can vary from batch to batch, they can pose serious health hazards.

HSA's laboratory tests found that 'Li Da DAIDAIHUA Weight Loss Capsule' contained the potent undeclared ingredients, sibutramine and benzyl sibutramine, while 'Du Zhong Jin Gu Wan' contained chlorpheniramine, diclofenac and a potent steroid, dexamethasone. Sibutramine, chlorpheniramine, diclofenac and dexamethasone are potent medicinal ingredients.

In particular, sibutramine has been disallowed for sale in Singapore and many other countries since October 2010 because of safety concerns about cardiovascular-related risks. Sibutramine was formerly a prescription medicine used in the treatment of obesity whereas benzyl sibutramine is an analogue (a chemically-related compound) of sibutramine. The use of sibutramine and benzyl sibutramine may cause serious adverse effects, including high blood pressure, increased heart rate, anxiety, heart attacks and irregular heartbeats.

Diclofenac is a potent painkiller and may potentially cause serious gastric bleeding, as well as cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and stroke when used for a

prolonged period. It should be used under close medical supervision, especially in patients with underlying heart conditions.

Dexamethasone, a potent steroid, is usually prescribed for inflammatory conditions and should only be used under strict medical supervision. Long term unsupervised use of an oral steroid can cause increased blood glucose levels leading to diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, an increased risk of infections, and Cushing's syndrome (which is characterised by a round face or 'moon face' and upper body obesity with thin limbs).

Please refer to the following website in HAS for details:

[http://www.hsa.gov.sg/content/hsa/en/News\\_Events/Press\\_Releases/2014/hsa-alerts-publictoillegalproductscontainingpotentundeclaredi.html](http://www.hsa.gov.sg/content/hsa/en/News_Events/Press_Releases/2014/hsa-alerts-publictoillegalproductscontainingpotentundeclaredi.html)

In Hong Kong, the above products are not registered pharmaceutical products. Pharmaceutical products containing sibutramine have been de-registered in Hong Kong since November 2010.

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