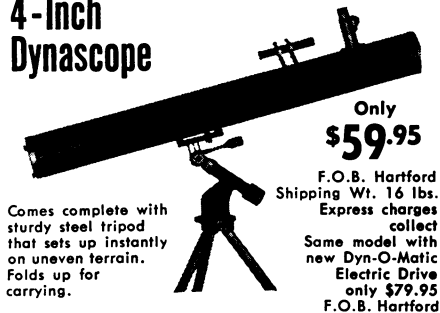


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PHARMACOLOGY

Counterfeit Drug Danger

➤ COUNTERFEITING may be on the increase in the drug market, the Food and Drug Administration has warned druggists.

FDA Commissioner George P. Larrick urged drug retailers to report to the nearest FDA District Office immediately when a pharmacist suspects he has been offered counterfeit drugs.

Counterfeit drugs are frequently delivered in paper or pliofilm bags or other unlabeled containers, usually easily distinguishable from an authentic wholesale package, FDA said.

A survey nearing completion indicates that drug counterfeiting may be increasing, although it has existed for some years.

Counterfeit diuretics with a label copied from Merck Sharp and Dohme were seized in Washington by FDA recently. The duped pharmacist said the analysis showed the counterfeit Diuril and Hydrodiuril to be up to the legal manufacturer's standard and he added that he had paid the wholesaler in good faith.

The same counterfeiter may have sold drugs in other cities in the East, South and Midwest, FDA warned.

Commissioner Larrick said that "even though the particular batch of a counterfeit drug may have the same strength and purity of the drug it counterfeits, the counterfeiting of drugs is contrary to the public interest and is in violation of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

"This reprehensible practice poses a serious threat to the public health in that it could undermine the fundamental control over the safety and efficacy of drugs."

FDA says counterfeit drugs are manufactured for the specific purpose of being passed off to and by the retailer when he

is filling prescriptions as the product of another manufacturer.

The drugs have been shipped to distributors under such false billings as "machine tools," "ceramics," "water softener" and "glass beads," and are frequently delivered to the local pharmacists by personal automobile, FDA said. Sales to the retailers are usually made on a cash basis without invoicing or other billing.

National pharmacy organizations have pledged FDA their full cooperation in detecting and eliminating drug counterfeiting.

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