

Huge haul of Indian Viagra seized in London

A large number of Viagra-style tablets produced in India but unlicensed for sale in Britain and the European Union have been seized by officials in London's Indian-dominated area of Southall and in Hartlepool, north England.

Nearly 4,000 tablets that officials consider to be potentially lethal have been seized from shops in Southall. The raids were conducted by Trading Standards, a government department tasked with protecting consumers and honest traders by ensuring that trade is carried out lawfully, fairly and safely.

The Ealing Council warned people of Southall who had bought the tablets - dubbed as 'love pills that kill' - to throw them away. The unlicensed tablets are considered lethal for those taking prescribed medicines for liver, kidney or blood pressure problems.

Reported side effects include stomachaches, headaches, blurred vision and an increased sensitivity to light. Patients with heart or liver problems, low blood pressure or who have suffered a recent stroke or heart attack could be risking their lives.

The council said in a statement: 'The potentially deadly pills being sold under-the-counter include Kamagra, Vigora, Spasmo-proxyvon and Kamagra oral jelly. The pills found have been manufactured in India and are all cheaper versions of mainstream licensed drugs such as Viagra.'

Councillor Sue Emmet, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, said: 'The Council is urging anyone who has used these pills or any other under-the-counter sex aid drugs to contact their GP (general practitioner).'

'Traders selling unlicensed medication are profiting from putting people's lives at risk and the Council will not tolerate this blatant disregard for the safety of others. We are closing in on shopkeepers involved in this potentially deadly ring as part of our commitment to making Ealing safer.'

Ann Hodges, Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards, said: 'These pills are not licensed to be sold in the UK and have not been tested to UK standards to ensure they are safe. People selling Kamagra could face prosecution under the Medicines Act and may be committing offences under trademark legislation.'

'Anyone with information about these dodgy traders needs to contact us. We need to find the people behind this scam and rid the market of these dangerous pills.'

The Teesside Crown Court in north England has been considering the case of a businessman who set up a website for sold Kamagra tablets through it. Officials trapped him by buying tablets through the website.

Graeme Carlton, the businessman, launched his online shop in March 2004 and ran it from his home for two years before it came to the attention of the Department of Health. Carlton claimed he did not know he was breaking the law by selling them when the police raided his home on a smart housing estate in Hartlepool.

Officers found a room had been converted into an office and a large amount of kamagra - both pills and jelly - was discovered along with a credit card machine. The court was told this week that 1,872 tablets worth around 4,700 pounds were seized together with piles of paperwork detailing sales amounting to 2,250 pounds.

But Judge Tony Briggs told Carlton: 'You are obviously a mature, intelligent and experienced man and I have to say I don't, at first sight, entirely accept that you were not aware there was a risk in selling this sort of stuff.'

'It quite clearly has received a lot of publicity and the basic problem with it is that you are selling a medical product that might have had unfortunate side-effects, particularly if they happened to be manufactured in a way which was less than appropriate.'

Judge Briggs delayed sentencing Carlton until a Proceeds of Crime Act application by Cleveland Police is heard in the spring of next year.

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