Reviewer's report

Title: Increased microbiological burden in illegal medicines

Version: 1 Date: 4 November 2013

Reviewer: Thomas Chan

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The Title of this paper should be easily understood, while accurately reflecting its contents. The following changes may be considered - "illegal medicines" replaced by "counterfeit and unapproved drugs" and "increased microbiological burden" by "microbiological contamination".

As counterfeit and unapproved drugs were the main focus of this study, less specific term (illegal medicines) should be avoided. Confusion caused by inconsistencies in the use of these terms throughout the paper was unnecessary.

It should be clear right at the beginning that this would address both counterfeit and unapproved drugs. It was disappointing that unapproved drugs were not mentioned until Material and Methods section.

All statements should be supported by references.

More updated references should be quoted.

References should be quoted accurately (ref 3).

The method of sampling of counterfeit and unapproved drugs for the present study based on the lots that were confiscated should be mentioned.

One herbal product was included in the study. Did this product contain herbs?

Although this study focused on microbiological contamination, there should be some measurements of the drug contents. Such information, if available, would provide a more complete picture about the quality problems and health hazards caused by these drugs.

It would be useful to provide objective guidance on interpretations and implications of the microbiological findings. In particular, how serious was the health hazard to patients in general and immunocompromised subjects.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.