

FDA LAUNCHES MOBILE APP TO MONITOR SIDE EFFECT OF MEDICINES, VACCINES AND OTHER HEALTH PRODUCTS

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) has launched a Mobile Application software called 'Med Safety App' to enable patients, consumers and healthcare professionals to report side effect of medicines, vaccines and other health products.

As reporting of side effects of drugs is currently a paper based and online using the web-based platform, SafetyWatch System, the launch of Med Safety App is in line with the Authority's strategy to embrace technology to enhance the reporting of side effects of medicines by healthcare professionals and the general public.

Launching the App, the Minister of Health Honorable Kwaku Agyeman-Manu who was represented by Director, Technical Coordination at the Ministry of Health, Mrs. Martha Ghansah Lutterodt commended the FDA for employing technology in its mandate to protect public health and safety since the impact of technology in recent times cannot be underestimated. "It is the right time for FDA to launch the Mobile App for reporting side effects of medicines by healthcare professionals and the general public to further promote its mandate of ensuring safe use of medicines. The introduction of the Med Safety Mobile App will help the FDA to identify medicine safety issues faster since this will make it easier for healthcare professionals and the general public to report problems with their medicines to the FDA at no extra cost once the app is downloaded" Hon. Agyeman-Manu said.

Ghana joined the World Health Organization Programme for International Drug Monitoring in November 2001. Since then, the FDA has introduced a number of initiatives such as Institutional Contact Persons (ICP) in healthcare facilities, Institution of the Qualified Person for Pharmacovigilance Programme, launch of Patient Engagement in Medicine Safety Programme, Introduction of the Patient Safety Centres and setting up a Ghana owned and dedicated online electronic data management system, SafetyWatch System to promote and improve patient safety.

As a result of these innovations, there has been improvement in reporting of side effects and increased reporting from 95 reports in 2005 to over 3,700 reports in 2018. At the moment, the FDA has over 11,000 safety reports through the pharmacovigilance system. This has led to a number of regulatory actions including withdrawal of substandard and counterfeit products, changes in product information and implementation of additional risk minimization measure for registered products to promote patient safety, Mrs. Delese A. A. Darko, the CEO of FDA mentioned some of the improvements that the Authority has made in the reporting of side effects of medicines since 2005.

It is expected that the launch of the App would improve the reporting of side effects since Apps are faster than paper and web-based systems currently used. "The Med Safety App today is our new, faster way to report safety issues of medical products to promote patient safety anytime and anywhere because you always have your phone

with you. It is a known fact that Apps are 1.5 times faster than mobile websites and perform actions faster too. It reduces the cost for our consumers from text messages and phone calls; we can instantly, directly and securely message our clients” Mrs. Darko added.

The Minister of Health encouraged “all Ghanaians who own smart phones to download the Med Safety Mobile App today to access the power it gives you to ensure that only safe medicines are available on the Ghanaian market.”

CEO of FDA also added, “I will like to encourage all to download the App from Google play and the App Store by searching for Med Safety or BlueForm. This is not only a reporting App, you also receive feedback on report submitted and news articles on the safety of medicines and other health products.”

In her appreciation, Mrs. Darko expressed, “I take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved in allowing this to happen – the Access and Delivery Partnership (ADP) funded by the Government of Japan, the WEB-RADR (Recognising Adverse Drug Reactions) Project and technical support and guidance from the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare Products Agency (MHRA).”