FDA CAUTIONS THE PUBLIC ON THE ABUSE OF GLUTATHIONE BLEACHING PILLS AND OTHER SUBSTANCES OF ABUSE

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) has cautioned the general public, especially pregnant women and lactating mothers about the dangers associated with the use of Glutathione tablets, capsules, pills and injectables as skin lightening agents. This caution was given during a Press Conference held by the FDA on the 4th of July, 2018.

Mrs. Delese A. A. Darko, the Chief Executive Officer of the FDA, expressed grave concerns over the emerging trend of the use of skin lightening agents in the form of pills and tablets being used by consumers including pregnant women with the erroneous impression that it would lighten the skin of their unborn babies. Mrs. Darko noted that Glutathione is one of such product which has found its way onto the Ghanaian market.

Glutathione is an amino acid which possesses antioxidant properties and plays a role in the detoxification of drugs and xenobiotics, which are foreign substances that the body does not recognize, like pollutants, some food additives and cosmetics from the body.

When used as a dietary supplement in doses of 250-500-mg daily, Glutathione possess health benefits including raising energy levels, strengthening the immune system, fighting inflammation and aiding in cellular repair.

Mrs. Darko also said the FDA currently, has registered some brands of Glutathione in accordance with section 118 of the Public Health Act 2012, Act 851 as a dietary supplements in minimal doses of 100-500mg per day per adult. As a food supplement, glutathione capsules should not be marketed as drugs or cosmetics and therefore, offering it for sale with the claim that the use of glutathione can cure certain diseases are clearly in contravention of Section 113(b) of the Public Health Act, Act 851 and criminal in intent, Mrs. Darko added.

However, FDA's intelligence and market surveillance has revealed that Glutathione containing products are on sale on our markets and have doses of 1,500,000mcg-2,000,000mg per tablet which far exceeds the recommended registered dosages of Glutathione preparations. Some of the brands found on the market include Gluta Prime,

Phyto Collagen, King of Whitening, Gluta White and Ivory Capsules Skin Enhancement Formula.

Medical science and some studies have also shown that such high strength doses of Glutathione can cause side effects like nausea, hair loss, trigger allergic reactions and serious toxic side effects including exacerbated asthma, renal failure, chest pains, breathing problems and damage to the lungs.

These high strength containing products are brought into the Country illegally and are being sold on the open market. The FDA would like the public to know that none of these products have been registered by the Authority and for the indications claimed on their labels. The Authority can also not vouch for their safety and is therefore asking the public not to patronizes these products as anyone that does so, does it at their own risk.

Mrs Darko also reiterated that the Authority has intensified its educational campaign on the abuse of tramadol and codeine containing cough syrups with new stakeholders such as Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) and National Youth Authority all joining the campaign.

She also said on the recommendation of the FDA's Technical Advisory Committee on Safety (TAC), the Honorable Minister of Health has in the interest of public health and safety, and pursuant to section 116 of Act 851 has banned the importation and manufacture of codeine-based cough syrups.

In the meantime, the FDA has intensified monitoring of border posts and market surveillance across the country and would like to caution that any person or persons found offering them for sale or distribution will face the necessary regulatory sanctions and the full rigors of the law.

Culprits who were arrested during earlier nationwide swoops and whose products were seized are currently assisting the Police in their investigations to establish how the products enter the Country and who the distributors are.

The CEO of the FDA, Mrs. Delese Mimi Darko, said the FDA would not relent on their mandate and would make sure that public health and safety is always upheld and used

the opportunity to thank the media for the tremendous work they are doing to educate the general public especially the youth on the dangers of abusing the Tramadol.

She also noted that collaboration with other relevant stakeholders is crucial if the war on substances of abuse is to be won.