

## **TRAINING WORKSHOP ON TOBACCO REGULATION AND TRAMADOL AND CODEINE ABUSE, ORGANISED IN THE NORTHERN, UPPER EAST AND UPPER WEST REGIONS**

As part of the Food and Drugs Authority's (FDA) mandate to ensure public health and safety, it embarked on a training workshop in the three northern regions on the effects of tobacco use and Codeine and Tramadol abuse.

The workshop which took place from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2018 was attended representatives from the Ghana Revenue Authority (Customs Division), Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Police Service, Ghana Prisons Service, Ghana Private Road Transport Union, Narcotics Control Board and National Security and Economic and Organized Crime Office.

Others representatives were from Ghana Education Service, Pharmacy Council, University For Development Studies (Students Representative Council), Over The Counter Medicine Sellers Association, The Media, Assembly Members, Opinion Leaders, Owners of Public Areas and FDA staff in the regions.

Mrs. Olivia Boateng (Head, Tobacco and Substances of Abuse Department) sensitized participants on the current spate of Tramadol and Codeine abuse across the country and the world at large.

She noted that Tramadol and Codeine are both prescription only opioid pain relievers that are addictive, and produce a feeling of intense euphoria comparable to illicit drugs such as heroin. The approved dosage strengths of Tramadol registered for use in Ghana by the Food and Drugs Authority are 50mg and 100mg tablets and injections.

The medicinal benefits of Tramadol and Codeine can quickly become harmful when they are not taken as prescribed. Excess amounts, regular use, or overuse can cause side effects, many of which are dangerous and may affect the brain in ways very similar to illegal drugs.

The training was necessitated due to increased and routine use of Tramadol (popularly referred to as 'tramol') by the youth, market women, commercial drivers and their assistants (mates) which was observed through FDA's nationwide public education, product quality and safety monitoring programmes at schools (primary, secondary, tertiary), markets, beaches, pubs, restaurants and transport terminals.

The reasons for abuse of these drugs include but not limited to the following: enhance sexual drive and to prolong ejaculation, performance enhancers, euphoria, pain reliever and making them dazed.

Participants were informed of some effects of Tramadol and Codeine abuse include dizziness, vomiting, nervousness, shallow breathing, weak pulse, impotence, infertility, convulsion coma and even death. Taking Tramadol or Codeine with other drugs without prescription may cause life threatening side effects such as confusion, loss of consciousness, brain damage, respiratory depression, liver diseases, renal dysfunction, increased depression and suicidal tendencies.

Mrs Olivia Boateng reiterated the negative effects of drug abuse on the nation's health care system, labour force and state security. She also mentioned efforts being made by the FDA to mitigate this menace as regulatory restrictions of distribution of tramadol and codeine, stakeholder collaborations as well as restricting influx of unregistered tramadol through unauthorised routes.

The regulation of tobacco and tobacco products was also discussed emphasising on the harmful effects of all forms of tobacco use, whether smoked, chewed, sucked or sniffed. Current trends of tobacco use ie Shisha and E-Cigarettes were mentioned to be equally as dangerous as the conventional cigarettes since they all contained nicotine which is very addiction.

Provisions of Part six of the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851) and Tobacco Control Regulations, 2016 (L.I.2247) were also outlined emphasizing the ban on smoking in public places, minimum age restrictions, pictorial health warnings, ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, fines and penalties etc.

At the end of the sessions, participants were of the view that increased awareness creation, effective multilateral stakeholder collaborations, preventing illicit channels among other things could curb these growing menaces.