



8100 Boone Blvd, Suite 220 Vienna, VA 22182 * 703-679-7233 (SAFE) * www.safemedicines.org

Protecting the mental health community from counterfeit drugs

The dangers to patients

American patients struggling with mental illness are at risk from counterfeit medications in a number of ways. Like patients in all therapeutic areas, there have been a wide variety of counterfeit incidents that affect drugs used to treat various conditions, such as [ADD, depression, anxiety, and other illnesses](#).

Because most mental illness is an ongoing condition to be managed, it may be tempting for patients to try and reduce the ongoing cost of medication and break the supply chain in search of a bargain. Such behavior puts the patient at risk for both a counterfeit and a lack of ongoing medical supervision.

For patients struggling with the embarrassment of mental illness or the threat of prosecution when struggling with addiction, [they may break the supply chain as well and risk their lives](#).

What is PSM and mental health advocates can do to protect patients

The Partnership for Safe Medicines (PSM) operates [educational programs for patient consumers](#) with many different types of handouts that can be personalized to a community. We also operate similar programs for [physicians, nurses, and pharmacists](#).

We'd like to work with mental illness patient advocacy groups to educate patients in two ways: to learn about the dangers of purchasing from unlicensed pharmacies and teaching them proactive ways to save money or avoid embarrassment. Deliverables for this effort would include:

- **DONE:** Small, bite sized tips for avoiding danger and saving money targeted to consumers. These are designed to be inserted into social media, email, or print newsletter in small amounts over time as part of a long-term communications campaign. [\[Link\]](#)
- **DONE:** 1 page handout for patients that teach money saving and safety techniques [\[Link\]](#)
- **UNDERWAY:** 1 page handout that specifically demonstrates protecting a patient's safety while still saving money and protecting their privacy.
- **UNDERWAY:** 1 page example of a price comparison between different US-licensed pharmacy outlets for a drug relevant to the community (Ativan, Lorazepam, Seroquel)
- **UNDERWAY:** A training manual to help facilitators of mental health support groups teach topics of safety and privacy and cost savings.
- **SCHEDULED AS NEEDED:** Joint, co-branded online webinars that go through these techniques that patients can watch live or recorded on their computer at home.
- **SCHEDULED AS NEEDED:** Live events with a PSM guest speaker teaching patient advocates and patients themselves the techniques for comparison shopping without sacrificing safety.

To be a part of this effort to protect patients in the mental health community, contact Shabbir J. Imber Safdar, Director of National Outreach, Partnership for Safe Medicines, shabbir@safemedicines.org, +1.415.683.7526.