

May 9, 2026

Lee Wolverton, Executive Editor
Leah Elliott, Director of Advertising
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
P.O. Box 2221
Little Rock, AR 72203

Dear Mr. Wolverton and Ms. Elliot:

The Partnership for Safe Medicines was troubled to find that the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette provided advertising space to TotalCareMart.com last month. The advertisement, published in your April 9th issue, promotes the purchase of foreign prescription medications that lack FDA approval, a practice that violates federal law and poses risks to the health and financial well-being of your readers. The *Gazette* may be inviting serious legal liabilities by enabling the illegal facilitation of personal drug importation.

Federal law. Although it isn't explicit in the ad, TotalCareMart offers readers non-FDA-approved, foreign prescription drugs that do not meet U.S. [advertising requirements](#) and are [in violation of federal law](#). These drugs are considered misbranded due to [misleading ads and non-compliant labeling](#). Federal law prohibits [introducing, delivering, and receiving](#) misbranded drugs. By publishing the TotalCareMart.com advertisement, the *Gazette* is facilitating illegal conduct by its readers.

TotalCareMart's website explains that its medicines [come from a variety of countries](#), but even Canadian drugs are not legal for sale in the U.S. or for individuals to use in the U.S. FDA has [repeatedly said](#) that the "importation of unapproved new drugs ... is illegal" and that "it is illegal for individuals to import drugs into the U.S. for personal use."

Unsafe medicines. *Gazette* readers buying unapproved drugs through such ads risk receiving products that bypass FDA [Good Manufacturing Practice requirements](#), leading to potential contamination or sterility issues. Since these foreign drugs bypass the U.S. track and trace system, they may contain unknown ingredients or be fraudulent and ineffective, posing a serious threat to readers' health.

Financial risk. Using "Canadian pharmacies" increases consumers' risk of [identity theft and fraud](#). Shipments may be [seized, detained, or destroyed](#) by U.S. authorities, and the FDA [can bill individuals](#) for the costs associated with storing and destroying illegal imports. Consequently, *Gazette* readers could not only face treatment delays, but could also lose significant funds, for which they could hold the newspaper accountable.

On a local note, it's a complete betrayal of Arkansas community pharmacies to accept advertising that touts illegal medicines. Arkansas community pharmacies served their patients through COVID, often staying open and operating despite the risk to their own staff. Many have struggled to survive predatory pharmacy benefit managers who often reimburse them less money than it costs them to buy medicine for their patients. The negative cash flow has caused many to close their doors over the last five years.

To have their local community paper promote illegal alternatives for those few community pharmacies that have survived is a betrayal by their own neighbors.

Given the legal, financial, and public health risks for Gazette readers, the Partnership for Safe Medicines advises the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* to cease running advertisements for TotalCareMart.com and all other illegal foreign pharmacies. We recommend you issue a warning to readers about the dangers of filling prescriptions through Canadian "referral services" like these. We would be happy to offer resources to help.

Sincerely,



Shabbir Imber Safdar
Executive Director

Cc: Jake Ellis, FDA's Office of Criminal Investigation

Nicole Elder, National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center

John Vinson, Arkansas Pharmacists Association

Ashley Vailes, Esq., Arkansas Board Of Pharmacy

Dani Peters, ASOP Canada

Amanda Johnson, Canadian Revenue Agency