

Teens Hooked on Viagra

Increasing numbers of Jamaicans, especially young teenage boys, appear to be endangering themselves by self-medicating with pharmaceutical drugs and experimental drugs without consulting health professionals. Many gain easy access to a wide cache of drugs through street-side vendors involved in operating lucrative "open air pharmacies" on the sidewalks of downtown Kingston. The vendors provide prescription drugs to persons who want to avoid the added expense and inconvenience of going to a doctor to get medication for an illness, or to males who are seeking to inject a big boost in their sexual performances.

The illegal trade has left the health sector baffled about how so many different kinds of prescription drugs could have found their way on the street side, and duly concerned about the health risk involved in the abuse of these drugs.

Street-side vendors ply their wares in the vicinity of pharmacies in the busy commercial hub of downtown Kingston, openly displaying prescription drugs along with regular wares on their stalls. The vendors have stockpiled a stunning variety of products from skin-lightening creams to antidepressants to antibiotics. "The practice is very popular and the vendors have a lot of prescription drugs on their stalls. They sell steroidal cream, vaginal inserts for thrush, ampicillin (red-and-black tablets), amoxicillin, sleeping pills, Retardin (cinchocaine) for men with a premature ejaculation problem, and antibiotics for yeast infection," said a pharmacist who works in downtown Kingston, and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"I have even seen men peddling the ampicillin and other antibiotics in transparent plastic bags on the wire-things that you see the peanut vendors with. It is quite blatant, they sell right in front of the pharmacies," the pharmacist said.

Z100 the new lick among schoolboys

According to sources, several schoolboys have been known to purchase medication to deal with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), yeast infections or to enhance sexual performance. Young women and men often purchase the stronger types of bleaching cream to "tone down" their complexion.

However, the biggest sellers are drugs that appear to boost sexual libido and performance such as Viagra, Cialis and Anafranil, or the gungo as it is known in the local parlance.

The "gungo" or the "boom" (Anafranil), an antidepressant, is sometimes used by local men to delay orgasm. Cialis or Tadalafil is an orally administered drug for treating erectile dysfunction which is sometimes called the Weekend Pill because of its 36-hour window of effectiveness.

However, another new experimental drug is called the Z100 and it is apparently the rage among schoolboys who more often than not do not have erectile dysfunction problems but still indulge in these rituals which are a part of Jamaica's drug-taking subculture.

"The Z100 mad, it ah the maddest ting, dem call it the Zinger, is a blue pill but it bad like yaws. It better than Viagra because yu can drink and smoke wid it, anytime yu ready, it de de, yu just have to mek sure yu cut it inna three...the little schoolboy dem love it," one street-side supplier said.

You can get four Viagra pills for \$2,500 and the Z100 will set you back \$700 for one pill.

However, despite the enthusiasm of the public and the vendors for these products, the practice could spell danger for the wider population.

"These drugs may be addictive, and it may induce persons taking them to consume larger doses just to get a similar effect," the pharmacist said. "People also run additional risks because they tend to diagnose themselves and take what they think appropriate. The danger is that their diagnosis could be incorrect or they take the wrong remedy."

Sources say that the vendors get their stocks through "back-door links at legitimate pharmacies and through other links at Customs when the shipments come in."

Source: Xnews