

Question:

I am writing to request information, including data, held by the Department of Health's Medicines Regulatory Group related to its investigations into unlawful possession, advertisement and/or supply of counterfeit or unlicensed weight-loss medicinal products and other aesthetic injectables in Northern Ireland over the last five years (1 April 2021 - 31 March 2026).

The products I would like this to cover include GLP-1 receptor agonists (dulaglutide, semaglutide, exenatide, liraglutide, tirzepatide), injectable Botulinum toxin type A, Hydroxocobalamin, Hyaluronidase, and any other injectable aesthetic products associated with other forms of Botox, fillers, steroids, tan jabs (Melanotan II or MT-II), polynucleotides and peptide injections.

Please include:

- How many investigations MRG has conducted into the unlawful possession, advertisement and/or supply of counterfeit or unlicensed weight loss injections and other aesthetic injectables during this period and the outcome of these investigations.
- As much information as possible on any seizures, prosecutions and offender levy fines issued for these products – including the person involved, the fine given, the associated product and volume, charges, and whether the case applies to a website, social media seller or locally based illicit sources etc.
- Copies of – or links to – and MRG inspection reports on aesthetic clinics in Northern Ireland carried out in the last five years.
- The number of concerns or suspicions about the unlawful use of injectables reported to the Medicines Regulatory Group during this time period and any further detail you can provide on this.

Please send any relevant data in Excel format.

Response:

The Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG) is responsible for enforcement of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department of Health. They provide statutory investigative and enforcement powers to determine whether there has been a contravention of any provision of these Regulations and to collect evidence as appropriate. The Department do not hold MRG 'inspection reports' on aesthetic clinics in Northern Ireland. All reports received by MRG are assessed and where appropriate an investigation is undertaken.

During this period the Department's Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG) has received 206 reports relating to the unlawful import, possession, advertisement or supply of GLP-1 weight-loss medications and other aesthetic injectable products.

Investigations have related to websites, social media platforms, importations and locally based illicit sources.

MRG has conducted corresponding investigations in respect of all these matters, resulting in 12 convictions with a further five prosecution cases currently pending. In addition, MRG has issued 65 letters of warning and advice and made referrals to various professional regulators, including the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the General Medical Council (GMC) and the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) where appropriate. Multiple investigations are currently ongoing. Details of prosecutions and convictions are generally accessible as a matter of public record and the Department are unable to provide any further information or personal data.

During the period MRG has seized 10475 counterfeit or unlicensed GLP-1 weight loss and other aesthetic injectables. The types of GLP-1 weight-loss and other aesthetic injectables referenced in these reports, investigations and seizures included tirzepatide, semaglutide and retatrutide, botulinum toxin type A, hydroxocobalamin, hyaluronidase, lidocaine, adrenaline and peptides.

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