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Barecode system to detect bogus drugs

THE growing, worldwide circulation of harmful, counterfeit drugs, which threaten the lives of people with health problems is also a problem here, though less so, perhaps, than it is abroad.

The Minister of Health and Population, Dr Ahmed Emad , said that no more than five per cent of the drugs on the Egyptian market were fake.

A new barcode system is being implemented to combat counterfeit drugs so as to enable the patient to use medicines safely, the minister said at a press conference held at the French Embassy in Cairo recently.

The system, which will be supervised by the Consumer Protection Agency (CPA), will be carried out through creating a technique based on the drug user. The user can send a message free of charge from a mobile phone to number 4438 with the hidden number that appears on the drug's package when it is scratched. Then, in minutes, he will receive a message saying whether the drug is the original or a fraud. This system is being launched by one of the

pharmaceutical companies working in Egypt.

In his speech, Andre Baran, the French Ambassador in Cairo, stressed that counterfeit medicine is a huge danger and Egypt is one of the countries that suffers from it. He said that one million people died due to fraudulent drugs annually worldwide.

The Minister said that fraudulent drugs were not only smuggled here, but were also produced illegally. He said the Ministry would set up a Higher Council for Health to be entrusted with controlling the local drug market. Advertisements for medicines and pharmaceutical products on TV satellite channels would also be under the supervision of the pharmacy sector affiliated to the Ministry of Health.

CPA Chairman Atef Yakoub said that the barcode system should be carried out in collaboration with several authorities to control the local market firmly.