

PRESS CLIPPING SHEET

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REPORTER:	Menna Ali

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Stopping \$133m worth of drugs going down the drain?

Menna Ali

ACCORDING to official statistics, Egyptians throw away \$133 million (LE1 billion) 'worth of drugs every year. To prevent this waste, a charity pharmaceutical organisation has launched an ambitious initiative to make use of drugs thrown away by households, pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies to offer monthly medical treatment to patients nationwide.

According to data released by the Chamber of Pharmaceutical Industry, wasted medicine accounts for two per cent of total drug sales in Egypt, each year.

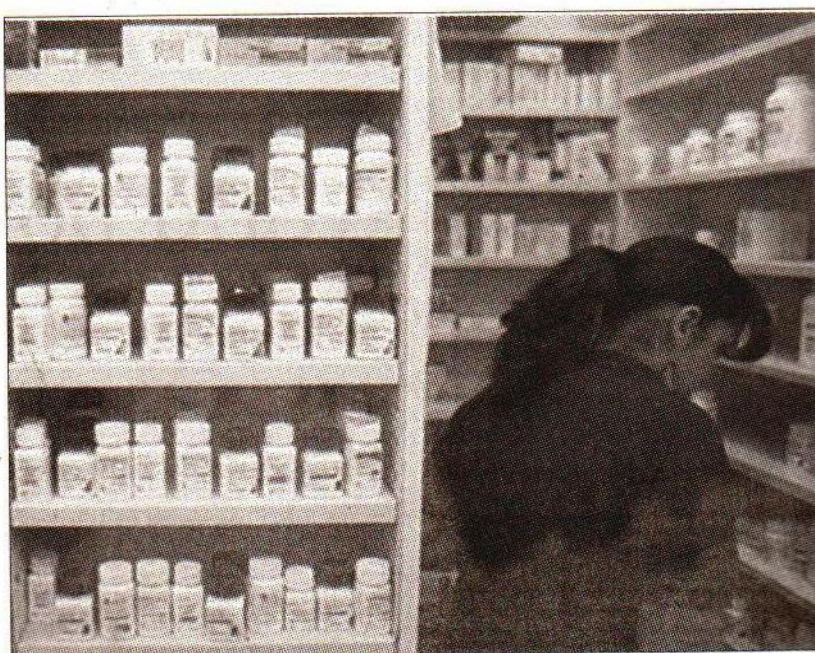
The government expects the pharmaceutical sales to surge by 15 per cent this year to reach LE35 billion.

Ali Ouf, Chairman of the Drugs Sector at the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce, said that the pharmaceutical industry posted a sales value of LE30 billion in 2014, adding that there are 150 companies working in this field.

Waleed Shawki, founder of the "Medicine for All" institution, has begun a community campaign whose aim is to offer surplus, unexpired medication to patients who need it, every month. So far, 400 patients have benefited from the scheme and Shawki hopes to reach other patients throughout the country.

"The idea dawned on me when I was working as a pharmacist. I discovered that Egyptian patients buy large amounts of drugs which are far beyond their needs. Sometimes, they do not use them until they expire," Shawki told local media.

Shawki kick-started his idea in 2006 by encouraging people to donate drugs.



A FILE photo of a woman looking at medicine in a pharmacy in Cairo.

He then distributed the medicines to mosques and charity organisations.

His next step was to open a pharmacy staffed by about 20 young volunteers who collected surplus drugs from patients, sorted them out and distributed them to low-income households.

The charity work expanded and Shawki opened another pharmacy; and the number of volunteers edged up to 250.

In recognition of his charitable work, Shawki was chosen to be a fellow of Ashoka Arab World, one of the world's biggest platforms for social entrepreneurs.

In order to implement the project in all the Egyptian governorates, Shawki

founded the "Medicine for All" institution in 2010. He co-operated with 30 other charity organisations so as to reach to the greatest possible number of Egyptian patients in dire need of medicine.

Iman Baibars, Regional Director of Ashoka Arab World, said that the organisation was tirelessly working to root out any obstacle facing the project by providing suitable places for drug storage, setting up a database for patients and establishing 10 pharmacies within the faculties of pharmacy nationwide, to sell unused drugs.

The country's domestic consumption of medicines topped LE25 billion in 2013, according to official data.