The Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA)

(Society Regn No. Bom. 10 of 1960 GBBSD • Public Trust Regn. No. F- 746 (Bom) dt. 4.4.1960)

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MISSION

The Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA) founded in 1939, is the national professional body of pharmacists engaged in various facets of the profession of pharmacy. The IPA is committed to promote the highest professional and ethical standards of pharmacy, focus the image of pharmacists as competent healthcare professional, sensitize the community, government and others on vital professional issues and support pharmaceutical education and sciences in all aspects

2018 - 2020

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IPA/110/280 August 14, 2019

To,
Drugs Controller General of India,
CDSCO, FDA Bhavan
Kotla Road, New Delhi-110 002
India

Sub: Request to put a stop to online pharmacies

Sir,

Greetings from the Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA), the premier organization of the pharmacy profession in the country, which is in existence for 79 years and is registered as a charitable trust. IPA has a membership of around 15,000 and it operates Pan India through 21 state branches and 56 local branches. IPA's main objective is to promote the science and art of pharmacy in all aspects and impart suitable education and training to professionals working in the area of pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences. As a member of the Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), IPA is actively involved in advising the Government on matters related to drugs & regulations. IPA is involved in activities aimed at improving healthcare in collaboration with international organizations like FIP, FAPA, CPA, SEARPharm Forum, WHPA and WHO. IPA also makes representations to the authorities on matters of professional and public interest and works constantly towards achieving a better and healthy India.

The major aim of IPA is to ensure that wherever medicines are handled, it should be done through a qualified registered pharmacist only. IPA continuously advocates all central and state regulatory agencies and the governments to ensure that drug dispensing is always by registered pharmacists against a qualified medical doctor's prescription for all those categories of drugs that require a prescription, as per the Drugs and Cosmetics rules and act as well as per Pharmacy Practice regulations 2015. We at IPA are aware that this could not be implemented completely all over the country. While the country and the pharmacy profession is struggling to remedy this challenging situation, another greater challenge emerged in the form of online sale of medicines. IPA has previously on several occasions placed before your good office as well as all other concerned government authorities, the dangers of online medicine sales, such as the risk of quality, misuse, and also the missing aspect of the pharmacist-patient interaction.

Also, we wish to point out that the honourable Courts of the country, on more than one occasion had pronounced that the online sale of medicines is illegal and dangerous, and directed the concerned regulatory bodies to put an immediate stop to online sales. Unfortunately, the sale goes on unabatedly, as if this aspect does not fall under the gamut of drug regulatory control. Today, the online sale of medicines has become like any other FMCGs with on-line pharmacy (medicines supplying companies) offering discounts through open TV and print media advertisements and promotions through other social media. This situation seriously jeopardizes what should have been a highly regulated dispensing of life-saving medicines through pharmacists and the moral and ethics of the pharmacy profession.

We would, therefore, like to draw your attention to this situation and fervently appeal to you to immediately initiate measures to stop the unregulated and dangerous online sale of medicines in our country. It would be pertinent to note, that in the interest of public health, the continuation of such sales would be highly detrimental.

Today, many of the developed countries do not permit the sale of prescription medicines over the internet and some countries do not even permit the sale of OTC medicines through the internet. In those countries where online pharmacies are permitted, very strict regulatory guidelines and mechanisms are in place. In fact, in those developed countries, the drug regulators themselves warn the consumers all the time about the risks in buying medicines online and educate the public on Do's and Don'ts of online medicines purchase. Another important fact in those countries is that **no discount war is allowed** on prescription medicines through internet sales. These countries have put in place ways to check the authenticity of prescriptions and largely use e-prescriptions which are from physician to pharmacist through online.

We sincerely hope for positive actions from you at the earliest!

Thank you and best regards,

Yours Sincerely,

National Hon. Gen. Secretary
The Indian Pharmaceutical Association

Copy to :

1. Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare
2. The Secretary (Health), Govt. of India, MoHFW
3. Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog
4. President, PCI