

E-Strategy for Medication: Is it really effective?

¹Dr. Chavda Akshayraj, ²Dr. Mrs. V. M. Thorat, ³Dr. Sarvaiya Darshansinh, ⁴Dr. Vaghasiya Keyurkumar, ⁵Dr. Mrs A. R. Shinde, ⁶Dr. Aditya shah,

¹Jr.Resident, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad, Maharashtra, akshaychavda71@gmail.com

²Jr.Resident, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad, Maharashtra

³Jr.Resident, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad, Maharashtra

⁴Jr.Resident, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad, Maharashtra

⁵Jr.Resident, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad, Maharashtra

⁶Jr.Resident, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Karad, Maharashtra

Abstract:

The past several years have seen ground-breaking advances in the commercial pharmaceutical industry in India due to a sharp rise in the country's internet users. There has recently been an alteration in the way prescriptions are written. It is regularly noted that pharmacy sales advertising techniques are becoming more varied, which has enhanced and accelerated the timely delivery of medications to people. According to speculation, teenage individuals as well as older sections learners are inclined compared to other demographics to purchase prescriptions from the web drugstore. We tried to spread the importance of utilizing pharmacy websites in this article, outlining their benefits and drawbacks as well as the safety measures that can be observed.

Keywords: E-strategy, Medication, Tele pharmacy, Internet services

Introduction:

Information technology has drastically influenced millions of people's working life over the past 40 years. Numerous industries have embraced the use of computers as a result of the benefits of computerised information handling. Being capable of to accomplish usual, recurring, and tedious tasks with uniformity is one of them, as is standardisation, regular application of vocabulary and terminology, and massive customising (the capacity of technological advances to provide amenities for an extensive audience while remaining open for personalization).

As a consequence of growing web usage and the accessibility of mobile devices, online shopping has exponentially expanded across genres; people are starting to purchase the bulk of their necessities via the internet, from foodstuffs to fashion. As an outcome of this huge shift in client purchasing behaviour, e-pharmacies have emerged as an appealing industry since they allowed customers to shop from the comfort of their own residences. [1]

Online pharmacies (e-Pharmacies, Cyber Pharmacies), which offer a variety of products (including beauty and healthcare goods) and prescription pharmaceuticals, are among the many commercial activities currently thriving in this environment. Some pharmacies only dispense medications with a medical prescription, some provide web counseling for prescribing and distributing

prescriptions, and others dispense drugs over the counter. [1] There are many factors that could influence a patient's decision to use the Internet to find medical attention. It serves as a better solution or second physician for patients in need. It also provides information about the medications that may be able to treat patients' concerns. [2]

Concept of E-Pharmacy:

The most common approach for spreading drugs in earlier times was through scribbled prescriptions, but with the rise of online purchasing, this form of distribution has been supplanted. Today, medicine is shipped securely via digital prescriptions, or e-pharmacies, also known as online, internet, cyber, and telepharmacies.

The word "e-pharmacy" describes an online pharmacy that delivers medical services and gives users the option to prescribe pharmaceuticals to patients. Patients can then receive these medications without ever having to leave the comfort of their homes. Prescriptions can sometimes be filled without the patient ever coming into contact with a doctor.

If held between main access to medicines for the under-served population, it is anticipated that the e-pharmacy model might have an impact on pharma sales in India by approximately 5-15%. [3] It enhances consumer accessibility and convenience, especially for those patients who are unable to leave the house

for any reason. An online pharmacy, or e-pharmacy, delivers orders to customers using postal services, shipping services, or online pharmacy web portals.

Types of E-Pharmacy:

The three categories of online pharmacy are typically:

1. Internet sites that only provide traditional pharmacy services

Only customers who have gotten a medical prescription and submitted it to the online pharmacy will get medication from these pharmacy-only websites. Because they do not start the actual drug transaction, pharmacy-only websites are the least contentious. Simply put, these websites process legitimate prescriptions that have previously been acquired from a qualified professional.

2. Online drugstores that take prescriptions

These facilities frequently employ both physicians and pharmacists. These should be distinct from websites, though, that may also employ pharmacists and doctors but simply provide advice on health-related matters. Many internet medical sites are included in the latter category. Typically, the prescribing-based websites will offer an online doctor visit via a medical survey or a doctor and patient participating in a simultaneous video chat. A prescription may be granted following the patient's entry and the doctor's review, which is followed by processing at an online pharmacy. While writing a prescription, a doctor may be the only person represented on a prescribing-based website. An online pharmacy then enters into a contract to fulfill the prescription and deliver the medication.

3. Internet pharmacies

An online medication store is a name given to the third kind of virtual pharmacy. This is a fitting description given that the main business of these websites is the sale of illegal narcotics. In this case, all a customer needs to do to get a controlled narcotic, or some other prescription medication is to visit the website, choose the desired medication, and pay with a credit card. These websites eliminate the necessity for a physical exam and a medical questionnaire. Due to their propensity to offer potentially harmful illicit drugs, especially narcotics, to almost anyone, authorities view these sites as the most unsafe.

Advantages of E-pharmacy [4]

- Buying prescribed medicines through an online pharmacy is an easy process. This method is an incredibly simple and rapid means to receive medication, particularly for individuals who reside away from a regular

drugstore, have jobs that are extremely painful are disabled, or elderly. Additionally, freight is significantly more economical than visiting a traditional store.

- A rguably the biggest and most important advantages of the E-Pharmacy programme is the reduction of time. Just purchase pills instantly to get the prescribed medicines. All you've got to do is enter the details of the prescription into the website or mobile application to make an acquisition. You don't have to go to the drugstore, and you won't have to wait for a queue there as well.
- The ability to save money is another benefit of purchasing meds via the internet. Research show that ordering medical supplies online can save consumers as much as thirty percent on their total spending.
- Pharmacy websites also offer the perks of anonymity and peace of mind. This form of communication delivers a great deal of practicality, especially for persons who are reluctant conversing with healthcare professionals in situ. Additionally, obtaining medications is feasible rather than any limitations on certain factors like sexual orientation or adulthood, which is awkward.
- The reason since e-Pharmacy offers a far wider range of options than a traditional drugstore, customers gain an immense amount from it. Standard drug shops offer a wide range of extra medicine options, but it wasn't frequently possible to find all medications in a nearby tangible shop.
- Most trustworthy merchants that work together via E-Pharmacy adhere to a drug-scrutiny process. Some stores demand a prescription from an attorney or provide shipment of drugs in exchange for the consumer filling completing a wellness assessment. A medical professional approves these questionnaires before they are released.
- A couple of online pharmacies offer useful information on meds and illnesses. It provides exposure to important authority, academic, and healthcare resources as well as helpful advice.

Disadvantages of E-pharmacy [4]

- Perhaps the biggest disadvantages of the internet-based pharmaceutical industry is its incapacity to perform bodily examinations. In specific situations, both hypothetical modelling and inspections of the body are

capable of being done quite well. Even if a virtual exam is carried out, an authorised physician is unlikely to be doing it.

- A negative aspect of e-pharmacy is the lack of in-person interaction. Whenever individuals have questions about the medicines that they're currently acquiring, it may prove quite difficult to contact a knowledgeable pharmacist. This may prevent patients from receiving their pills on a single date.
- End-users can purchase drugs from a number of online pharmacies needing a doctor's note. In a scenario like this, sufferers may actually get sicker rather than get better. As a result, whilst giving drugs, chemists must unequivocally request an authorization. It is quite difficult to thwart rogue illegal internet-based pharmacies from peddling generic medications while putting the well-being of others in jeopardy.
- A handful of the issues with the E-Pharmacy technology is the safeguarding of personal and fiscal data. For the purpose of to ensure that sensitive information and monetary details are kept private, pharmacies that operate online ought to include separate customer anonymity aspects on their company's official website.

Prerequisites for E-pharmacy:

- Needs a legitimate prescription. So that the drug authorities may check the caliber and norms of online pharmacy shops, internet pharmacies need to have a physical address.
- Electronic pharmacies must register with the Central Licensing Authority.
- Commercial drug licences will be given out by the legislature's Narcotics Management Commission.
- Pharmacists must be present in order to receive orders and answer concerns from clients.
- A chemist is not allowed to write prescriptions for addictive pharmaceuticals or Category X substances.
- Scripted medications listed in Part H and Category H1 ought to be bought with a legitimate doctor's authorization.
- Pharmacies that operate online are required to adhere to the information technology legislation of 2000's online sales standards.

Growing Factors for India's online pharmaceutical market

E-pharmacies are gradually gaining a sizable portion of the Indian pharmaceutical retail value chain. The following elements are helping to make this possible:

— **Conventional pharmaceutical retail:** It is very unstructured due to the presence of several shops in numerous locations, which creates issues like the sale of shoddy and fraudulent drugs, pricing battle between retailers, and a lack of medicine grant. The rise of internet pharmacies can help stop this problem because they give customers access to well-organized online marketplaces where they can buy medications.

— **Help from the authorities:** In latter years, the Central and State Governments have recognized the importance of E-Pharmacies, classifying them as vital services and promoting them on the Aarogya Setu App. Pradhan The National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), Digital India, Ayushman Bharat, Startup India, and the Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) are a few of the measures the government has launched to promote the growth and convenience of doing business in the online pharmacy sector.

— **Quality and comfort are provided:** By cutting out intermediaries and providing discounts, e-pharmacies can simply guarantee a supply of authentic and authorized pharmaceuticals (a broad choice of medications that are safe for use in humans) at fair prices with easier access (residence shipment, a virtual store, and an improved electronic currency infrastructure). E-pharmacies are anticipated to receive widespread acceptance in our country due to their convenience and affordability.

E-pharmacies' trends during the Pandemic year:

The COVID-19 virus spiralled out of control and completely stopped all national economies. The main issues worldwide as a result of the global lockdown caused by COVID-19 include deteriorating stock markets, movement constraints, a shortage of goods, and unemployment. The global medical sector was also being damaged by the epidemic. A paradigm shift was necessary to restrict public interaction and mobility because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Digital and e-services were therefore becoming more and more significant in the COVID-19 worldwide crisis. Due to the ease of access with a single click and protection during the outbreak of COVID-19, online drug sales were also on the rise. When fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has relied heavily on traditional pharmacies as well as e-pharmacies around the clock. E- Pharmacies operated around all

of the time to preserve their services and to make sure that people's medical care needs and drug needs were addressed in a safe manner, considering the reality that frontline personnel was exposed to the virus in a public setting.

India's online pharmaceutical industry has flourished during the pandemic. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, Dharma Sheth, the CEO, and founder of Pharma Easy claims that there was a spike in demand for cough, cold, and cough medicine online since individuals wanted to keep these medications on hand whether or not patients needed them.

Online drugstores in India are nonetheless in their beginnings, but they have an opportunity to develop into a sizable industry in the years to come.

Leading companies present in the Indian online pharmacy sector:

Presently, 150 firms are engaged in the digital pharmaceutical business. India requires strong laws and regulations in this area. The top ePharmacy players at the moment are PharmEasy, 1mg, Apollo, Netmeds, Practo, Lybrate, Docprime, Healthkart, Care On Go, Medsonway, MChemist, Myra, Medlife, SastaSundar etc. [5]

Online pharmacy controversies:

1. Distribution of prescribed medications without a Verified Doctor's Prescription:

The first significant issue is the non-prescription distribution of prescription-only drugs. After the anthrax instances in 2001, when authorities discovered that people had acquired ciprofloxacin without a prescription, this controversy attracted public attention. The General Accounting Office determined that 13% of internet pharmacies distributed drugs without a prescription, despite the fact that the majority of these pharmacies were located overseas. [6, 7]

2. Using virtual clinicians

The execution of prescriptions created by online doctors who only get patient information through online surveys, where there may be marked boxes that are chosen for the reply to assist the individual receiving the medicine in issue, is another field of problem. Because patients might use these online doctor services to buy prescriptions for issues they would not have mentioned to their local practitioner, this form of care raises concerns. Alternatively, if they contact a Virtual physician and obtain an online prescription for a drug that treats their ailment,

individuals may completely forgo consultations with regional clinicians. [8]

3. Importing Medicines:

Seniors without access to Medicare drug prescription coverage may use online resources to find more affordable prescription medications coming from international pharmacies. In the latest Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll of the general public, it was discovered that 7% of those polled admitted to purchasing prescription medications from a drugstore located in Canada or another overseas nation either in person, online, or by mail in order to save money. Due to these actions, a second issue has emerged: online prescription medication purchasing via overseas pharmacies. [9]

Whilst certain virtual drugstores are reliable and enrich their consumers, others practise questionable clinical practices. [10,11]

Issues and problems of E-Pharmacy: [12]

Although the idea of an online pharmacy appears to be very simple and handy, there are risks associated with it. Online drug sales encounter a number of significant problems and difficulties. Below we discuss a few of them:

Inter-State Distribution of Pharmaceuticals: The regulations governing the shipment of medications from one Indian state to another are unclear. The Drug Department in each state issues licenses to allow the sale of specific medications there. It is possible that some medications that are legal in one state may not be licensed in a different state. It will be very challenging to maintain a tight eye on the supplier from which pharmaceuticals are given to customers in India because the e-commerce industry runs independently from one single state to another.

Sales of planned drugs: Online drug sales pose serious risks to Schedule X sales and schedule H drugs to customers. Drugs falling under two lists are not included. It is a crime that is given to a customer without a prescription and is punishable. A valid customer record must exist. Includes patient initials, physician, and location for each Category H

and Category X Medicine sold by pharmacies. Multiple medicines can be dispensed with one prescription through various e-pharmacy websites. An appropriate regulatory framework is now needed. Get involved in this complex issue as substance abuse rates in India may rise.

Supplying Restricted Medications: Clients who purchase pills via the internet run a significant chance of receiving Category X and Part H medications. It is against the law to provide medication that are on either of the two lists to client's sans a doctor's order. For the course Part H and Category X medication that the store sells, an accurate client file must be kept that includes the patient's identity, their physician's identity, and the client's residence. Repeated drug delivery can be made using the same order through various e-pharmacy firms. The urgent need for a robust official structure to address this complex problem is due to the possibility that drug usage in India would increase as a result.

Collecting Payment Before Delivery: It is unclear under Indian law if a pharmacy may take money before delivering medications. Money may only be collected from customers following the actual delivery of medications, according to certain legal conditions. When putting a purchase, the numerous payment methods offered by online pharmacies, including debit/credit card payments, payments made using cellular pochette, etc, would undoubtedly prompt concerns about whether the Rules are being broken.

Prospects of Virtual Pharmacies

Online drug stores are establishing an entirely novel sector where fresh ways of validating and verifying the prescriptions placed plus the drugs that are shipped will be necessary. There are worries about the emergence of shady pharmacies that operate unlawfully and provide hazardous medications to customers. The larger firms should find it simpler to verify that the pharmaceuticals they are delivering comply with all FDA criteria, but such unscrupulous companies can harm the reputation of the sector. Nevertheless, the sector will definitely innovate as a result of the continuous expansion of pharma e-commerce to offer the easiest way of ordering prescribed drugs via the Internet. Digital medicine ordering options mixed with further beneficial innovations like immediate price checking and expense auditing should result in an all-around simpler, more effective pharmacological journey for both patients and medical professionals.

Furthermore, manufacturers can expand their businesses and help more people and medical specialists by utilising online pharmacies. Web medicine shopping, for instance, is ideal for distant towns where customers are unlikely to have recourse to any pharmacies. From the commercial side, every medical organization appreciates how simple it is to

make purchases and how all the company's alternatives are presented on a single, all-inclusive interface.

Pharmacological distributors and producers might be considering ways to adopt electronic commerce features to meet customer and provider requests.

Drug manufacturers contemplating integrating online shopping should assess their company's discretionary assets and distinct objectives before developing a deployment strategy. Suppliers are able to determine whether it's sensible sense to proceed with the switch to the internet after weighing all of the prospective hazards and advantages.

Pharmacology business-to-business and consumer online stores and technologies will change in tandem with the medical sector's ongoing evolution to satisfy the wants and requirements of the current practitioners and people. Pharmacy suppliers and producers need to take action right away if they want to benefit from this sector's explosive growth.

Conclusion

After reviewing the foregoing reasoning, it might be stated that online drugstores lack the human element that a conventional drugstore has. In contrast to what is possible at your neighborhood drugstore, you are unable to communicate with a chemist to seek information about adverse reactions or interactions between medicines. The articles we wrote should have provided a little insight into the benefits and drawbacks of traditional and online pharmacies. Although utilizing a virtual pharmacy is occasionally risky, it can also be cheaper as well as easier than conventional pharmacies. Currently, drug sales on "crook portals" are protected by Online tracking methods. This relates to a form of compliance emphasis that deals with unauthorized medications, comparable healthcare scams, and the illicit distribution or acquisition of prescribed medications lacking legal permission. The avoidance of the selling of medicines illegally and with the objective of protecting our well-being should be given concern. The reality is that buying medications from online pharmacies offers a great deal of convenience, promotes the consumer's confidentiality, and protects the established practices of providing medications. Customers can therefore employ such amenities with the identical assurance they probably had in their local pharmacist. But they must avoid "crook websites" that offer things that have not been permitted or circumvent rules that protect the rights of customers. With the ability to offer medical assistance to people in all regions of the world thanks to today's cutting-

edge technology, an improvement in the field of healthcare may be anticipated.

References:

1. Radatz, C. (2004). Internet Pharmacies, Wisconsin Briefs, Brief 04-5, March 2004. <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/wb/04wb5>.
2. Collste, G., (Ed). 2000, Ethics in the Age of Information Technology. Studies in Applied Ethics series, vol. 7. Linköping: bpt- tryck ab.
3. Alamelu R, Amudha R, Cresenta S, Nalini R, "Online Pharma Retail Is A Promising/Unpromising Avenue: An Indian Context" AJPCR, 2016; 9(2): 26-29.
4. Chordiya S.V, Garge B. M. Epharmacy vs conventional pharmacy. Int J Comprehensive Adv Pharmacol 2018;3(4):121-123.
5. Dhamija R E-pharmacies in India: global and local trends point to a positive future Analysys Mason Limited. October. 2019.
6. Rice B. Online prescribing: the growing problem of online pharmacies. Med Econ. 2001;78:40, 42, 45.
7. Termini RB. Regulation and enforcement: who should mind the Internet drugstore? Pharm Med Device. 2002;2(7):1.
8. Bauer, K., 2004. Cyber medicine and the moral integrity of the Physician –Patient relation, in: Ethics and Information Technology, 6, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
9. Hazlet TK, Bach MH. The Internet, confidentiality, and the pharmacy.coms. Camb Q Healthc Ethics. Spring 2001;10:157-160.
10. Fung, CH., Woo, HE., Asch, SM. (2004). Controversies and legal issues of prescribing and dispensing medications using the Internet. Mayo Clin Proc, 79(2):188-94. doi: 10.4065/79.2.188.
11. Letkiewicz, S., Gorski, A. (2009). The Potential Dual Use of Online Pharmacies. Science and Engineering Ethics, 16(1):59-75.
12. Shivani Dutta, E Pharmacy in India: Issues and challenges. Amity International journal of Juridical Sciences;2017 (3);24-29