

E-pharmacies in India: Developments and challenges

In India, more than half of the population lacks access to health care. The situation is worse in small towns and villages where there are no pharmacies since no doctors wish to practice there. Health-care challenges in India demand the usage of digital platforms. The government's flagship initiative, Digital India, intends to bring internet access to every corner of the country, including remote towns and villages. This would encourage the use of e-pharmacies among the populace and further open doors for this industry expansion. An online platform known as an "e-pharmacy" enables users to buy prescription medications and other goods and services, which they may then get quickly and comfortably at home.

E-pharmacies are becoming a key component of the answer for the problem in India. E-pharmacies provide Indian residents with a number of benefits, which are especially wanted in the current climate of post-COVID-19-related problems. E-pharmacies offer total authenticity of medicines with full "track and trace" capacity, assuring integrity of medicines directly from producers up to patient homes. They also make medications inexpensive and accessible to even the most distant areas of the nation.

E-pharmacies coexist peacefully with retail pharmacies everywhere they are used. While retail pharmacies are necessary for the immediate need of acute medicines such as painkillers and antibiotics, e-pharmacies are viable due to their focus on chronic therapies. However, for reasons that are incomprehensible, the association of retail pharmacists in India has started a futile and aggressive campaign. In India, the retail pharmaceutical industry is a flawed, leaky system that experiences systemic failure. Retail pharmacist organization is concentrated on a pointless assault on online pharmacies, rather than working with the government and the general people to reform the system.

According to the Pharmacy Act of 2015, E-Pharmacies are careful in hiring pharmacists to validate prescriptions and provide medications in tamper-proof containers. E-pharmacies have volunteered to

the government to be audited by any qualified regulatory body and routinely digitally record every prescription. Making fresh medications available that keep their full efficacy is a difficulty as India has the world's most dispersed and fragmented pharmaceutical market. To maintain full efficacy during the whole shelf life, medicines in India must be kept below 30°C and in an environment with a relative humidity of 70%. This would necessitate continuous product cooling. Unfortunately, most retail pharmacies lack air conditioning, endangering the stability of medications. Perhaps, only online pharmacies adhere to the World Health Organization's "model guidance for storage and delivery of medicines" and guarantee that customers receive their medications at home in perfect condition.

All sales under the e-Pharmacy model take place through authorized locations under the supervision of a professional pharmacist. However, under Section 27(b) (ii) of the Drug and Cosmetic Act, drug regulators may bring legal action against any person or company found to be in violation of any rule. Pharmacies and pharmacists provide the general people with excellent medical treatment and medication. The use of cutting-edge technological models will improve the process overall and make it more efficient, transparent, and dependable.

The discussion should contrast complaint and non-compliance, regardless of the channel, rather than e-Pharmacies vs. brick-and-mortar pharmacies. The discussion should be on how these models may best complement one another to meet the needs of 130 crore Indian residents in terms of health care and build a robust, future-proof health-care system.

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