

## THE CHANGING ROLE OF DOCTORS IN PROMOTION OF RESPONSIBLE SELF MEDICATION

□ Ms. Pramila Naik\*

### ABSTRACT

India is the second largest country with a high population and medical needs. The pharmaceutical industry is growing tremendously in India to satisfy the needs of patients (customers) in terms of medication. With an increasing literacy rate and the exposure to medium has lead to consumers wanting to play an increased role in wellness and consequently self medication. The study of this paper is based on changing role of doctors in promotion of responsible self medicines. The role of doctors promoting medicines has a greater impact on pharmaceutical companies to make a market share in the pharmaceutical industry. The study done in this paper will explain you all the type of marketing strategies used by the advertising agencies of pharmaceutical companies using doctors to promote responsible self medication. Advantages and disadvantages of doctors promoting responsible self medication will be highlighted. The study of this paper will also explain the Schedule X or H guidelines used in Indian pharmaceutical industry. The study in this paper was conducted on a small group of doctors in Mumbai region and the data was analyzed using descriptive and statistical methods.

**Keywords :** Medicines, Promotion, Strategy, Role, Doctor, Pharmaceutical industry, Mumbai, India.

#### Introduction

Self-care may be defined as what an individual person does on their own to deal, maintain health and prevent themselves from diseases. The concept includes lifestyle, health nutrition, proteins and also self-medication. Now a day's individuals have become very health cautious therefore they are seeking more information and taking appropriate decisions about their treatment from their reliable sources such as websites or television advertisements or responsible self-medication drugs once prescribed by their physician. When problems are self-limited in minor illness then self-care can be used.

#### What is promotion of drugs?

Promotion of drugs can be defined as informational and persuasive activities by pharmaceutical manufacturing companies and pharmaceutical distributors to influence the sales and

uses of the medical drug. Promotion of drugs has important factors bearing the rational usage of drugs, then the medicine price control mechanisms, pharmaceutical manufacturing company's availability of the drug or medicine, then equally distribution of the drugs under the section of central public health issue.

In the Forum of Medical Ethics Society (FEMS) promotion of drugs practices have been divide into three parts as follows 1.Information 2. Incentives 3. Trading practices

**1. Information** – Doctors in India are not given much information on drugs in form of documentation. Medical product information in India is given by medical representative of pharmaceutical companies and advertisements in medical journals. Advertisements of medicines in Indian medical journal issue less information on safety of medicines compared to America and British

\*Ph.D. Research Scholar - Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

counterparts.

2. **Incentives** – The pharmaceutical companies gives small gifts that are acceptable by the doctors and in return the pharmaceutical companies earn huge profits. The patients only accept sample of drugs inform of gifts.
3. **Trading practices** – In India now days the pharmaceutical companies have become more aggressive in the promotion of their products (drugs) to the customers. First the customers would receive all the information from the chemist or their trusted pharmacy shops and even from their family doctors or trusted medical practitioners (physicians). Now the customers receive information of medicines from the television advertisements, websites and newspaper

advertisements.

**What impact does pharmaceutical companies' promotion make on attitudes and knowledge of individuals?**

Customers or patients report that they often make use of new drugs promotions as a source of information to treat their minor illness. The patients or customers who are uneducated in India trust the promotion of pharmaceutical companies who uses doctors for promoting their medicines and start purchasing these drugs or health nutrition's for self-medication. For example a individual in urban area of India watches the promotion advertisement of zandu pancharista syrup for digestion problems and he/she sees a doctor is promoting the syrup so they start taking it if they are going through bad digestion problems.



Figure 1: Advertisement of Zandu Pancharista with a doctor & Advertisement of Colgate with Dentist and a child.

**Marketing Strategies used by Pharmaceutical Companies to Influence Doctors**

**1. Samples Utilization Strategy**

It is a strategy where special promotion is conducted at doctor's level where the pharmaceutical companies send their medical representative to handover samples of their products to doctors to give free to the

patients that visit them for checkups when they are ill. The doctors do not take the cost of the sample medicine products from patients. This is a strategy by pharmaceutical companies to sale they products in future directly by physicians and indirectly by patients in form of responsible self-medication.

**Table 1 - Doctor's Sample Utilization Strategy and Cost :**

Activity for Marketing	Cost (percentage)
Doctor's samples	30
Direct advertising/public relations	6
Post-marketing research	9
C.M.E./symposia/conferences	6
Sponsorships/books expenditures	7
Group meetings or party	18
O.P.D. camps programs	10
Direct-to-consumer advertising	10
Other activities	4
Total	100

The above table shows the cost incurred for doctor's sample and group meeting is 48 percent of the total activities undertaken for sales promotion activities. On the other part, a doctor attends 12 numbers of medical representative's calls as an average per day.

## 2. Sponsorships Strategy

This is one of the strategies where the pharmaceutical companies provide sponsorships to individual doctors for their future courses, research journals and research works. This depends on the attitudes of the different type of doctors. The pharmaceutical companies spend a lot of funds on the sponsorships of doctor's activities because they know that doctors are the main people who promote the products more to customers and doctors are the right people who make the brand practice activity possible in customers (patients).

## 3. Strategy of Fieldwork

In this strategy the most important person is the medical representative also known as MR. The medical

representative are hired by pharmaceutical companies to represent their company products to the doctors and also to introduce the new products and brands to the doctors. The pharmaceutical companies give proper trainings to the medical representative who does the fieldwork for them. In the training the medical representative are taught how to greet doctors and given the complete information of the medicine which is to be promoted. The information of medicine means the advantage and the side effects if not taken properly. The pharmaceutical companies allow their medical representatives to offer sample medicines to the doctors and the MR also prioritize to which doctors to give more samples. Then the medical representatives also give their company pads, pens, calendars, diaries and they even give photo frames of doctors promoting their products to hangs in the OPD or clinics. These all activities help the medical representative to keep the doctor thinking of their company products and promote responsible self-medication to the patients who visit them to cure their minor illness.

Factors	Impact Rating
Personal relation with M.R.	1
Sponsorship	2
Symposia	3
Medical conference	4
Journal, adv.	5
Direct mail	6

**Table 2 - Comparative Effect of Various Factors**

## 4. Direct-to-consumer advertising Strategy

This strategy is the most important strategy now days. Where people get attractive to the advertisement on television, internet then printed media and radios. So now the pharmaceutical companies marketing agencies are smart to hire doctors in advertisement to do the promotion of the pharmaceutical company's products (i.e. new medicines). Sometimes you see your favorites bollywood personalities or sport personalities with a doctor endorsing for an advertisement were the doctor is advising them to take a particular brands self – medication to cure their minor illness or muscular pains . Now the pharmaceutical companies even provide samples of calcium medicines in newspapers as direct-to-

consumer advertising strategy. Example Kareena Kapoor endorsing for vitamin tablets of brand Corcal Bone & Beauty and sample packet of the vitamin was distributed in Times of India newspaper in Mumbai region as a promotion event. Doctors in India are not allowed to promote a medicine on television advertisement or on printed media. So these pharmaceutical companies marketing agencies so a doctor in advertisement who is practicing in UK or USA or in some other country and sometimes they represent a model as an doctor in a specific advertisement of an medicine who is advising another person to take it to cure his/her illness.

## 5. Diversified Strategy

This is a strategy where the pharmaceutical

companies marketing agencies keep promotional events where few well known doctors are invited and seminar is kept and tea and snacks are offered. Then there is a small debate over some medicines new in market and their brands. The pharmaceutical companies invite the leader doctor of the respective city to give a brief speech over a particular topic and this helps the other doctors to remember the brands and medicine name for which they are invited to promote to their patients if the patient needs them will illness.

### Pros and Cons of Doctors Promoting Self-medication

If a doctor is promoting a protein drink for children then it is an advantage as children do not eat food proper in age group of 4 to 8 and while seeing the advertisement then the parents start giving the protein or the nutrition drink to their child for better health. Then doctors promoting headache, cold and cough drugs have an advantage as they give the proper information. But if a doctor is featuring in the advertisement on the television then seeing him many uneducated people starts taking it when they feel that type of symptoms and they may take over dosage of that medicine that may harm them as allergies or even death so doctors should not feature in any kind of advertisement or promotion for self-medication.

### Promotion of self-medication safety

#### What to Do

- First an individual have to learn how to read and understand the facts given on label of medication.
- An individual should have the knowledge which drug to pickup for their symptoms of illness example if the individual have a headache so he/she should not pick a drug that also treats running nose and fever.
- Store the medicines in dry and cool place and keep the drugs out of reach of small children.
- Measure the dosage of medicines before inhaling yourself or giving to your children (e.g. if you are taking syrup then use a measuring spoon or the measuring cap of the medicine bottle).

#### What Not to Do

- Not to share adult self-medication with children because it may not suit the age of the children.

- Not to take two different medicines for cough and cold at the same time because it may cause medicine over-dosage because of same ingredients.
- Not to give aspirin to children below 18 years of age because it may cause a disease known as Reye syndrome in younger children.

### How to dispose self- medication responsibly?

- Mix two or three medicines to be decomposed with some substance such as used coffee grounds.
- Then if you have OTC syrups then pour them in sealed plastic bag or containers and throw them in household waste.

### What is Schedule X?

It is a class of prescription **drugs** in India which is appearing as an appendix to the drugs and cosmetics rules that was introduced in 1945. These are **drugs** which cannot be purchased over the counter without any prescription of a well qualified doctor in any situation. It is compulsory for the retailer to preserve the prescription for a period of two years and maintain the sale purchase records. The list of Schedule X drugs: Amobarbital, Amphetamine, Methylphenidate, Barbital, Methylphenobarbital, Cyclobarbital, Pentobarbital, Dexamphetamine, Phencyclidine, Ethchlorvynol, Phenometrazine, Glutethimide, Meprobamate, Secobarbital, Ketamine, Methamphetamine.

### What is Schedule H?

The **Schedule H drug** comes under the purview of Narcotic **Drugs** and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, it must carry the texts "NRx" and "**Schedule H drug**". The Schedule H drugs cannot be sold without prescription same as Schedule X drugs. Examples: androgenic, anabolic, oestrogenic and progestational substances; Alprazolam, Hepatitis B vaccine, Ibuprofen, Vasopressin etc.

### Conclusion

This study has showed the impact of changing role of doctors in promotion of responsible self-medication and wellness of lifestyle. These will help people to understand the type of marketing strategies used by pharmaceutical companies to promote self—medication to customers. Further study can be done on different type

of marketing strategies used by pharmaceutical companies to promote prescription drugs to doctors and as well as patients.

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