

E-pharmacy vs conventional pharmacy

S.V. Chordiya^{1,*}, B. M. Garge²

¹Principal, ²Lecturer, Gangamai Institute of Pharmacy, Dhule Maharashtra, India

*Corresponding Author: S.V. Chordiya

Email: sachinpharma09@gmail.com

Abstract

Pharmaceutical industry in India is the 3rd largest & fastest developing industry in India. Online pharmacy is one of the technology advancement in creating huge demand in the upcoming days. Though it is convenient to buy drugs online as it causes high risk of self-medication and misuse of drugs especially coming under the schedule H and X, so to overcome these risks local pharmacy may be preferred. In this article we have discussed about difference between the E-pharmacy and conventional pharmacy with their pros and cons.

Keywords: E-Pharmacy, Conventional pharmacy, Pros and cons.

Introduction

The internet has taken over the world in all aspects. Not sparing any field, it is not surprising that even pharmacies have gone online. An online pharmacy refers to a business organisation that is involved in sale of pharmaceutical preparations like non-prescription and prescription-only drugs, by ordering them online and delivery through mail. About 32,500 online pharmacists working worldwide aims to promote public health by legal framework of country and thus fulfils the successful vision of Digital India.

The sale of drugs over the internet began in the late 1990s and has expanded to an extent that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has devoted a complete section on its official website to "Buying medicines over the Internet". USFDA has given certain guidelines to the people to stay vigilant against illegal online pharmacies. Nevertheless, whether these online

Pharmacies is a boon or bane still remains questionable.¹

E-Pharmacy

An E-Pharmacy is a pharmacy that operates over the internet by selling drugs, medicines & sending them to the customers. Internet making all the things easy & convenient. Patients can now buy use of prescription of registered

medical practitioner order the medicines via use of internet & receive them at their own doorsteps. They are a massive hit & more and more people are opting to use them rather than stroll down to local pharmacy.²

How does an E -Pharmacy model works?

1. Mobile-based application for consumers to upload the scanned copy of their prescriptions and place requests for medicines.
2. Every order that is received to be verified and checked by a team of registered pharmacists.
3. The registered pharmacists to forward the validated prescriptions to the pharmacy store from where the medicines are dispensed.
4. The web or mobile-based platform to be governed under the IT Act 2000 and only act as a platform to facilitate connection between consumer and pharmacy store. The IT Act 2000 applies to companies that do business in India. This includes entities registered in India, outsource there, and maintain servers within the country's borders. The act covers all activity involving online exchanges and electronic documents. If your only connection with India is having customers there, you are not held to the IT Act.^{3,4}

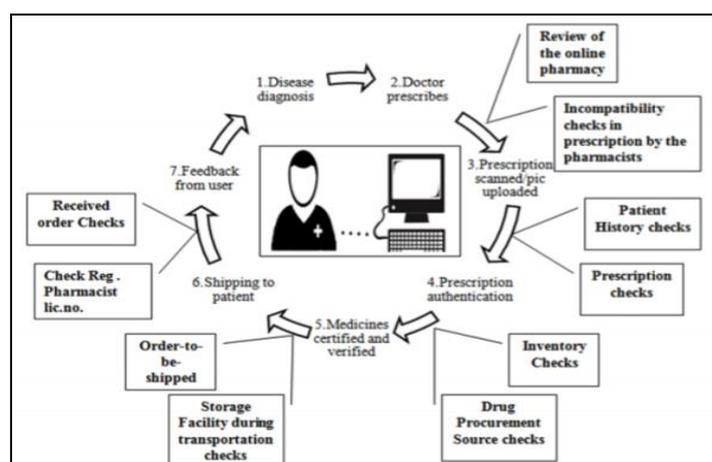


Fig. 1: Regulation for safe online selling of the drugs

Pros of an E-Pharmacy

1. Convenience: It is easy to order online medicines with prescription. Individuals who live great distances from a terrestrial pharmacy, the elderly, disabled persons, and those whose daily schedule includes additional hassles, all can benefit from the easy and fast purchasing of medicines online. Additionally, shipping charges are often less than the expense incurred from travel costs associated with a visit to a traditional pharmacy.

2. Future Vision: Under Digital India initiative, Jan Aushadhi Program the governments takes initiative to create awareness & provide access of affordable medicines to the general public which compromising to good quality drugs. The operating model of E-pharmacy which has mobile & web based applications, directly linked to inventory & dispensing existing at Jan Aushadhi Stores.

3. Time Saving: In just a matter of minutes, you can log into the internet, head over to an E-pharmacy website and buy any prescription medicine that you want. It takes less time and effort than travelling to your local pharmacy and having to wait in line for your medicine.

4. Lower Price: Drug shopping on the internet helps a buyer to save money. Several surveys conducted by research bodies have shown that as much as one third the price can be saved on prescribed medicines if they are bought online.

5. Private & Confidential: This is particularly helpful to people who find it hard to speak face to face with doctors & pharmacists. It is also helpful to people who feel as if they have very embarrassing or shameful situations like erectile, disfunctioning, acne, STD's, hair loss etc. They can order their products without feeling embarrassed or judged.

6. Range of Choices: E-pharmacy offers a great variety of options. They usually have larger stocks of drugs than a physical pharmacy.

7. Drug Approval: Most of these legal stores have a process of drug approval. They require a prescription from a personal physician, or at least offer a drug as a prescribed medication only after the consumer fills up a questionnaire. This questionnaire is reviewed by a doctor before the drug is dispatched.

8. Medical Information: Some online pharmacies provide useful information about medications and diseases as well as links to medical resources such as universities, government agencies, and health associations.⁴⁻⁶

Cons of E-pharmacy

1. Lack of Physical evaluation in place: Since the internet makes it easy to sidestep the safety net, these online stores do not have any processes of medical supervision or physical evaluation in place. If at all there is any such process, these are not performed by a licensed health professional.

2. Need of using the same Online Pharmacy all of the Time: If you do not use the same online pharmacy all of the time, they may not be aware of any potential drug interactions, it can be difficult to find someone to answer any specific questions about medications you may have, it is

not possible to get the prescription the same day and you lose the personal interaction.

3. Some online Pharmacies don't Adequately Safeguard your Health: By failing to require a prescription, you could take medication that is not appropriate for you. It could take patient to the extreme stages of sickness. PharmacyChecker.com- approved pharmacies must require prescriptions. Some illegal online drug stores deal with dangerous contaminated, counterfeit or outdated drugs that can lead to dangerous drug interactions.

4. Some do not Adequately Protect your Personal and Financial Information: It's important for pharmacy websites to publish their privacy policy, one that promises not to share your personal information with third parties. Online financial transactions should be secured through adequate use of encryption technology. Pharmacychecker.com verifies whether privacy is promised and transmittal of financial information is secured.⁷⁻⁹

Conventional Pharmacy

Pharmacists are the health professionals most accessible to the public. They supply medicines in accordance with a prescription or, when legally permitted, sell them without a prescription. In addition to ensuring an accurate supply of appropriate products, their professional activities also cover counselling of patients at the time of dispensing of prescription and non-prescription drugs, drug information to health professionals, patients and the general public, and participation in health-promotion programmes.

Pros of Conventional Pharmacy

1. Processing of Prescriptions: The pharmacist verifies the legality, safety and appropriateness of the prescription order, checks the patient medication record before dispensing the prescription (when such records are kept in the pharmacy), ensures that the quantities of medication are dispensed accurately, and decides whether the medication should be handed to the patient with appropriate counselling.

2. Care of Patients: The pharmacists seeks to collect and integrate information about the patient's drug history, clarify the patient's understanding of the intended dosage regimen and method of administration, and advises the patient of drug-related precautions, and in some countries, monitors and evaluates the therapeutic response.

3. Monitoring of Drug Utilization: The pharmacist can participate in arrangements for monitoring the utilization of drugs, such as practice research projects, and schemes to analyse prescriptions for the monitoring of adverse drug reactions.

4. Responding to Symptoms of Minor Ailments: The pharmacist receives requests from members of the public for advice on a variety of symptoms and, when indicated, refers the inquiries to a medical practitioner. If the symptoms relate to a self-limiting minor ailment, the pharmacist can supply a non-prescription medicine, with advice to consult a medical practitioner if the symptoms persist for more than a few days. Alternatively, the pharmacist may give advice without supplying medicine.

5. Informing Health Care Professionals and the Public:

The pharmacist can compile and maintain information on all medicines, and particularly on newly introduced medicines, provide this information as necessary to other health care professionals and to patients, and use it in promoting the rational use of drugs, by providing advice and explanations to physicians and to members of the public.

Cons of Conventional Pharmacy

1. Time: Sometimes drugs are not available at nearby pharmacy store they may prove to be time consuming for the elderly and busy scheduled peoples to see proper drugs at right time to prevent the risk of patients health.

2. Price: The price of drugs is more than online pharmacy medicines due to middle mans profit. The patient due to its poverty may find difficulty in buying costly and branded drugs which may prolong its long term diseases

3. Inconvenience: Chronic elderly patients who are not able to go to pharmacy store may cause difficulty in finding the stores situated at long distances or unrelated places.¹⁰⁻¹²

Conclusion

Finally summing up above explanation it can be conclude that online pharmacies do not have the personal touch that a physical pharmacy has. You can not talk to a pharmacist to get advice about side effects or drug interactions the way you can at local pharmacy. Hopefully our articles explain something about the pros and cons of E-pharmacies and conventional pharmacy. They can be very convenient and less expensive than traditional pharmacies, but always keep in mind the dangers of using an online pharmacy. Now-a-days the "rogue sites" drug stores are under security through Internet surveillance practices. This is a sort of an enforcement priority that targets the sale or purchase of prescription drugs without a valid prescription as well as controls unapproved new drugs and similar health frauds. The points to be taken in to consideration are the prevention of illegal sale of the drugs and end motive of securing our health. The fact remains that drugs purchased at online drug stores offer high levels of handiness put forward privacy for the buyer as well as safeguard traditional procedures of prescribing drugs. Thus consumers can use these services with the same confidence as they would have had in the neighbourhood pharmacist. But they must stay away from "rogue sites" that sale unapproved products or sidestep conventional procedures that safeguard the interests of consumers. A positive transition in the health care system is potentially expected through the use of such advanced technologies to reach every nook and corner of countries and provide medical help.

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