



Is Drug Curing or Menace?



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Opinion

The most essential components of the health care of the public are food and drugs. The recovery of ailing patients from illness is directly related to the quality of drugs consumed. The proliferation of spurious drug in India is a serious problem for the health of the people & there is an urgent need to curb it. India has made a commendable progress in the field of medicine, surgery and the manufacture of pharmaceutical preparations etc but the menace of spurious drugs is endangering life of living beings consuming it unintentionally. A drug shall be deemed to be spurious if it is manufactured under a name which belongs to another drug, if it is an imitation of another drug or if it has been substituted wholly or partly by another drug or if it wrongly claims to be the product of another manufacturer. (Section 17-B of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, as amended by the Drugs and Cosmetics (Amendment Act, 1982.)

The quality of Drug formulations has been a prime concern at National as well as International level. Circulation of spurious drug can lead to grave & adverse consequences on both consumers (patients) and genuine manufacturers. The sale of medicines in petty shops other than in authorized medical shops is posing severe health risk to people. Another related issue here is the employment of unqualified personnel to sell drugs over the counter at even registered medical shops. Procuring medicines from pharmacists without prescription for minor ailments is a common practice everywhere. However, such sales have severe ramifications when drugs are bought from shops that are not authorized.

Curbing the menace

There are enormous health hazards of spurious drugs on both humans as well as animals as far as veterinary practice is considered. Indiscriminate use of substandard drugs in animals in turn has toxic/detrimental effects on the ultimate consumer's i.e human beings. Series of measures to tackle the menace in the country include introduction of a system of certification of chemist and drug stores in cities and districts by independent agencies. Pharma companies need to share all technological knowledge regarding medicines available with them without any reservation with other authorized producers, so that genuine medicines can be traced. Drug sale licenses not to be made free for all, it should be issued only to persons

holding diploma or degree in pharmacy from a recognized/duly approved university/institution. Compulsory requirement of proper prescription from a registered Veterinary/ Medical practitioner to be made mandatory by all drug sellers before issuing medicine. A statewide survey should be conducted to measure the magnitude of spurious drug trade in the state, lifting samples from every nook and corner of the state in a statistically designed scientific manner. Creation of intelligence cum legal cells to facilitate busting of spurious drug rackets and their prompt prosecution must receive top priority. There should be a provision of secret funds and incentives for informers giving information about spurious drugs and the drug inspectorate staff must be suitably trained in collecting intelligence inputs and their investigational skills required for probing spurious drug. A new central, fully equipped drug testing laboratory must be established for testing drug supplies at Medical Colleges, its associated hospitals and all hospitals at district level.

Tail piece

Globally, every country is the victim of this menace, resulting in life threatening issues, financial losses and retardation in trust on health care system. It is the responsibility of every healthcare provider to ensure that the quality and safety of medicines are not compromised. The genuine pharmaceutical companies should upgrade the technology in routine for packing their products as to have a lead over the spurious drugs manufacturers, which copy the technology as then there will be a lag time before the latter can acquire the innovation. They should use bar-code, holograms and special inks for printing, encapsulated logo on the tablets, proof packing etc to make it difficult for the small spurious drugs manufacturers to copy. Recycling of used bottles should be discouraged and strongly avoided with the help of proper embossing of month and year of the date of manufacture. There should be proper availability of record of even trusted distributors & provision for testing random samples from stocks to eliminate possible mixing of counterfeit drugs as a matter of routine.

In the end spurious drugs pose a public health hazard, waste consumers income, and encourage drug resistance. Stronger state licensure supervision of drug suppliers, latest technological approaches including use of radio chips, selling of drugs under

proper guidance of a medico or vet, public awareness, focusing on management of supply chains, monitoring secondary drug market control, strengthening laws against defaulters and penalties for

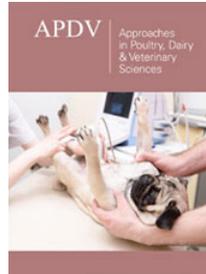
counterfeiting, improve quality control are some key points to freeze on the menace.



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