

# Business Standard

TRENDING #Coronavirus #MarketUpdate #Covid-19Impact Search News, Stock Quotes or Company

You are here: [Home](#) » [Companies](#) » News

## With little access to doctors, drug firms go digital to stay relevant

The rise of e-pharmacies and tele-consultations during Covid-19 has made it easier for healthcare companies to access patient pools

### Topics

Lockdown | Drug makers in India | Pharma sector

Sohini Das | Mumbai  
Last Updated at June 13, 2020 23:40 IST



*IPA-BCG study said that while healthcare companies have successfully identified and responded to the immediate needs, they recognize the need to rethink and redesign their commercial operating model for the future*

Show ^

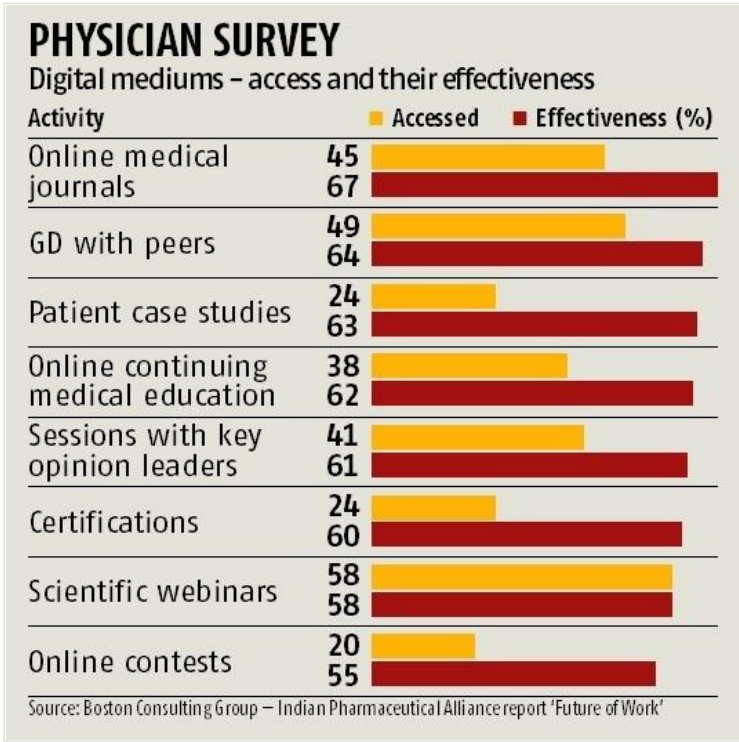
Soon a physician may be browsing through an online platform that would curate information for him on therapies, treatments, and diseases in an innovative manner - through videos, write-ups and such like. With free movement being curbed, access to doctors becoming

restricted and fresh prescription generation taking a hit, drug firms are looking at ramping up their digital strategies when it comes to marketing and promotions.

Industry observers say that with lower cases in smaller towns, clinic visits and prescription generation continue. Through the digital medium, [companies](#) that do not traditionally have field force in these areas, can attempt to expand their prescription base.

The Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) came up with a report on the 'Future of Work'. It said that the healthcare eco-system today is navigating uncharted territory with Covid-19 impacting all major stakeholders. "Due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, traditional channels of interaction between patients, prescribers, healthcare [companies](#) and pharmacies have been disrupted," it said.

Healthcare companies, meanwhile, have focused on supporting prescribers and patients in new ways. "Results from the physician survey indicate that 98 per cent prescribers spent time on digital mediums such as webinars organised by leading healthcare [companies](#). Additionally, all prescribers that participated in our survey were contacted through phone or video by multiple healthcare companies. Firms have also embraced the digital way of executing internal processes and are focused on capability building of their field force," the study said.



Lupin CEO Vinita Gupta told Business Standard that "Virtual connect with the physicians has ramped up a lot in the last two to three months. Our team went from face to face promotions to virtual promotions - through video calls, whatsapp etc."

During the [lockdown](#) the company started 'work from home' for its field force. "We introduced an engagement and medical detailing platform through which our reps could connect with our doctors. As we all know, doctors are extremely stressed and we did not want to further bother them with

calls. We created a solution for our medical representatives (MRs) to record a video of the product brand and share it with the doctors who could view it as per their convenience," said a company spokesperson. She added that almost a year back, we introduced Anya, a chatbot on Facebook, to answer routine health queries. "This has been loved and promoted by doctors extensively," Lupin claimed.

Ramesh Swaminathan, Lupin's CFO said that they were looking at a full-fledged digital strategy irrespective of the Covid19, but this crisis has taught them a few things."Technology will play a very big role in the way we do our business. At some point we will look at menu-driven option for our doctors, like a Netflix (online video streaming platform), where he can unfold a lot of information, on therapies etc. Lot of things possible through technology today."

The IPA that represents the top drug firms in the country felt that while digital or virtual connections are here to stay, but the relevance of a personal interaction with the doctor would not be undermined. "But, now there is a restricted access. So physical visits can be followed up with virtual follow ups," said Sudarshan Jain, secretary general of the IPA.

Show ^

He added that content will play a key role here. Once several companies start developing their digital platforms, mostly branded and showing medical content relevant to the doctor, a physician would choose the content that he would find relevant. "This would, however, help companies to reach out to physicians also in areas where their field forces do not have much presence," Jain felt.

Mumbai-based Cipla on Wednesday said that it is picking up a 22 per cent stake in a digital solutions offering firm GoApptiv. This offers digital solutions for integrated brand sales management, digital marketing and channel engagement for [pharma companies](#). It also provides digital solutions for customer relationship management, patient support and healthcare data analytics.

A Mumbai based pharma analyst who tracks the firm felt that Cipla may be adopting this digital route for better data management. "They have adopted a One India strategy - whereby an MR is promoting their prescription brands, generic products as well as their over the counter products. Some salts have multiple brands. A digital marketing approach may help them to monitor the performance of MRs, brands, and markets," he explained.

IPA-BCG study said that while healthcare companies have successfully identified and responded to the immediate needs, they recognize the need to rethink and redesign their commercial operating model for the future.

"According to our physician survey, 61 percent prescribers found the various digital engagements conducted by healthcare companies during [lockdown](#) to be effective, and 70 percent indicated that they would like to continue the same going forward. 64 percent of this set intends to spend 30 mins-2 hours per day on these platforms. With restricted access becoming the new normal, it is imperative for healthcare companies to engage with prescribers through digital avenues," it noted.

The rise of e-pharmacies and tele-consultations during Covid-19 has made it easier for healthcare companies to access patient pools. "In our view, companies can engage directly with patients by enabling patient services for existing patients or developing therapy shaping initiatives for new patients," it said.

**Read our full coverage on Lockdown**

First Published: Thu, June 11 2020. 19:59 IST

- [READ MORE ON](#)
- [LOCKDOWN](#)
- [DRUG MAKERS IN INDIA](#)
- [CORONAVIRUS](#)
- [ONLINE PHARMACIES](#)
- [PHARMA SECTOR](#)
- [PHARMA COMPANIES](#)
- [COMPANIES](#)
- [NEWS](#)

**RECOMMENDED FOR YOU**

**Promoted Stories**

Recommended by

**COMMENTS** 0

POST COMMENT

There are no comments to display. Be the first one to comment!

**MORE ON MARKETS:**

Show ^

QUICK LINKS

BROWSE STOCK COMPANIES

[STOCK MARKET LIVE](#)

[STOCK MARKET NEWS](#)

[A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#)  
[P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#)