

# India at forefront in repurposing drugs to maintain global supply chains amid COVID-19, say Experts

*In the wake of COVID-19, pharma marketing is embracing digitization. India's share in world's vaccine production is 50%, making it the largest supplier*

By **BioVoice Correspondent** - August 25, 2020



**New Delhi:** Hardly any industry has left unaffected due to the unprecedented scourge of COVID-19. And the pharma industry is no exception to this. What sort of challenges the Pharma industry has gone through during COVID-19 times? How digital adoption has been helpful and successful? How the new decade of pharma industry post COVID-19 will play out? And what will be the challenges of Pharma MSME and its solutions. These were some of the important topics discussed at length in the Emerging dimensions of Pharma Excellent eSummit held on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020 organised by HEAL Health Connect Solutions in association with HealthScape.

The magnitude of COVID-19 is unprecedented in the modern world. And currently, only supportive care is available wherein repurposing of drugs is the most feasible approach to tackle the situation. Drug repurposing is nothing but using an approved drug for the treatment of a disease or medical condition other than what it is approved for. In COVID-19 scenario, this method is very useful in addressing the disease quickly since these drugs are approved, readily available off the shelf, their safety for human use is established and their side effect profile is well known. The technology of drug repurposing has the capability of breathing a new lease of life in the healthcare and pharma sector of India.

Speaking about the challenges that Pharma industry has faced during the lockdown and its move towards digital adoption in the Pharma Excellence eSummit-2020, Mr Sudarshan Jain, Secretary General of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA), said, "COVID-19 has posed the greatest humanitarian challenge, however, in such a time of crisis, healthcare and pharma industry have played an important role. And more significantly, India has been at the forefront in repurposing the drugs as it has a large share in supplying drugs to the world. The role of India has been immense in maintaining the supply chain to the world. Now, Indian pharma industry has been gearing up not only for 'Make in India' but also for 'Make for the world'.

"Also, during COVID-19, we see the following things happening in the Indian pharma industry: Repurposing of the drugs; Increase in the production of vaccines as it contributes to 50% of the total production of the world; The development of Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) in Indian pharma industry; Digital adoption in the pharma industry; Adoption of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) in India; and Development of Human Resource. Indian Pharma industry has been already exporting drugs to 206 countries, and it will grow more, showing the new path to the world not only in manufacturing drugs but also in Research & Development", added Mr Jain.

Elaborating on the challenges of the pharma industry in COVID-19 times and the immediate solution which could help tackle the grimming situation in the Pharma Excellence eSummit-2020, Mr O P Singh, President Sales & Marketing, Cadila Pharma, said, "Repurposing of drugs may be an immediate solution to combat the pandemic and saving the lives of the people, and it has been also tried out by the Indian pharma industry. For example, Sepsis has been repurposed for the treatment of COVID-19 and found to be efficacious. Now, Indian pharma industry has been heading towards innovation."

Throwing light on the digital adoption and its significance in pharma marketing in the Pharma Excellence eSummit-2020, Mr Vivek Srivastava, Co-founder & CEO, HealthCare at Home, said, "I have seen large scale digital adoption across the country during COVID-19. Even in home isolation care, we have used digital platforms for consultations with the doctors. By the use of digital technology, we have treated almost 2500 odd patients in home isolation. Digital adoption is booming everywhere including pharma marketing."

Speaking on the significance of digital education required for the doctors, Dr G S Grewal, President Elect, DMA, said, "This is the grave reality that in Delhi, even 30% of doctors didn't have desktops in pre-COVID times. So, along with digital adoption, its proper education and training is essentially required."

Overviewing the pre and post COVID Indian pharma industry perspective, Dr Swadeep Srivastava, Founder & CEO, HEAL Health Connect Solutions asserted, "Although there has been slump in pharma industry in Apr-Jun quarter, yet from July, the Indian Pharma industry

is bouncing back on track, and likely to grow 3%-5% in size during FY 2020-2021 as per India Ratings and Research. In June, the demand for cardiac drugs registered the strongest growth of 15.9 per cent y-o-y in terms of value and anti-diabetic segment grew at 12.7 per cent y-o-y due to continued buying during the period of the lockdown.

Commenting on the accessibility of drugs in India Mr Atul Sharma, Founder & Managing Director, HealthScape said, "In Indian pharma industry, manufacturing volumes after declining to 50%-60% in April 2020, given the strict lock-down, has improved significantly to 60%-80% of the original capacities during May-June 2020. In India, we have been in a reasonably good position in terms of the accessibility of the drugs as it is easily available over the counter compared to the eastern European countries."

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