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In an article, 'Future of Work: Building the future quality function', the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) and Boston Consulting Group outlined the elements that pharmaceutical companies need to consider while designing their future quality function: building the next-gen lab, reimagining the role of QA, designing the quality organization of the future

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The Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) recently published a report outlining the elements that pharmaceutical companies need to consider while designing their future quality function. The after effects of the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in quality functions being plagued by several challenges such as unavailability of manpower, inadequate remote working infrastructure, and significant volatility in supply and demand. Titled 'Future of Work: Building the future quality function', the article explores how Indian pharma companies can build future quality function in post-COVID19 era.

The article reflects on key innovative measures adopted by stakeholders during COVID-19, and the learnings for pharmaceutical companies as they design the future ecosystem. Discussions with leading pharmaceutical companies indicates that many advanced global pharmaceutical sites work with a 5:1 manufacturing to quality ratio vs. the 2:1 in India and 20-30 per cent of time across several roles is spent on low/ non-value adding work. pharmaceutical companies find this as an opportune time to step-change the overall first time right achievement and migrate from the current 3 sigma levels to closer to what industries such as auto and hi-tech achieve (i.e. 6 sigma). pharmaceutical companies also need to fundamentally simplifying the ways of working across both Quality Control (QC) and Quality Assurance (QA) functions.

BCG and IPA believe that the journey towards 'Future of Work' is defined through a maturity model across the three elements of building the next-gen lab, reimagining the role of QA, designing the quality organization of the future. Pharmaceutical companies can choose where to position themselves basis their strategy and investment willingness, over the next few years. For each choice, there are implications on the firm's quality function, with a focus required on building capabilities and managing change.

Speaking about the report's insights, Sudarshan Jain, Secretary General, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance said, "COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the pharmaceutical operations making it necessary for everyone to explore ideas on transforming work. This report provides a view on how companies could advance its journey towards a new quality function. Emerging technologies and strengthening regulatory framework are two key catalysts for this change. In addition to the technological advancements, the report emphasizes the need for a clear change management and culture transformation roadmap to make these investments effective"

“Covid 19 crisis resulted in discovering many gaps & thus opportunities in the pharmaceutical Manufacturing & Quality area. Need to think differently was clearly evident in the arena of Quality Control & Quality Assurance. New opportunities were discovered namely multitasking (as opposed to SME concept), digitalization (to reduce dependency on manpower) & work from home (social distancing). The journey of reimagining “Future of Quality” with leaders in pharma industry & BCG consultants was an exercise resulting in clearly defined path for achieving goals in the field of Quality” said Shirish Belapure, Senior Technical Advisor; Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance.

“Pharmaceutical companies in India have always prioritized Quality to achieve desired patient outcomes. While investment in upgrading quality systems and processes is a continuous effort, this is an opportunity for companies to significantly step-up their quality capabilities. Combining digital capabilities with upskilled workforce will be imperative to design the new quality function. It can go a long way in managing disruptions such as COVID-19 and transforming the role of quality function to a strategic business partner” said Rahul Guha, Managing Director and Partner; India Lead of BCG’s Healthcare Practice.

“COVID19 has demonstrated a clear call for action for pharmaceutical companies to fast forward automation of the entire quality function and to build the enabling org capabilities. This report provides a potential pathway to do this in a modular fashion and capture significant benefits in the process” said Vikash Agarwalla, Managing Director and Partner; BCG’s Healthcare Practice.



Boston Consulting Group

COVID-19 pandemic

Future of Work

future quality function

Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance