

Science

India at the forefront of repurposing Covid-19 drugs to maintain supply chain: Experts

Prashasti Awasthi Mumbai | Updated on August 24, 2020 | Published on August 24, 2020



However, the pharma industry needs to be digitised for greater efficiency and effectiveness

For the modern world, the magnitude of Covid-19 has been nothing less than unprecedented. Currently, only supportive care through repurposing of drugs is seen as the most feasible approach to tackle the situation, said experts at the Pharma Excellence eSummit organised by HEAL Health Connect Solutions, in association with HealthScape on August 20.

Drug repurposing is using an approved drug for the treatment of a disease or medical condition other than that for which it was approved for.

Experts believe that drug repurposing can address the disease quickly since these drugs are approved, readily available off the shelf, safe for human use, and their side-effects being well-known. Drug repurposing has the capability of breathing a new lease of life into the healthcare and pharma sector in India.

The expert panel speculated that India will play a significant role in repurposing drugs to maintain the supply chain of the Covid-19 vaccine across the world.

Speaking of the challenges that the pharma industry has faced during the lockdown and its move towards digital adoption, Sudarshan Jain, Secretary-General of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA), said in a statement: “Covid-19 has posed the greatest humanitarian challenge. However, in such a time of crisis, the healthcare and pharma industry has played an important role.”

He added that India has been at the forefront of repurposing drugs, as it has a large share in supplying drugs to the world. India is playing a big role in maintaining the supply chain to the world. India’s pharma industry has been gearing up not only for ‘Make in India’ but also for ‘Make for the world’.

He believes that the Indian pharma industry is on the cusp of a major change. India accounts for 50 per cent of global vaccine production. He stressed that the Indian pharma industry needs to be digitised in order to perform efficiently and effectively.

The Indian pharma industry exports drugs to 206 countries. This number is set to grow, showing a new path to the world not only in manufacturing drugs but also in research & development, said Jain.

Elaborating on the challenges of the pharma industry, OP Singh, President - Sales & Marketing, Cadila Pharma, said in a statement: “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 by the Indian pharma industry. ”

Throwing light on digital adoption and its significance in pharma marketing, 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 doctors. With the use of digital technology, we have treated almost 2,500-odd patients in home isolation. Digital adoption is booming everywhere, including in pharma marketing.”

GS Grewal, President-Elect, DMA, said that in Delhi, even 30 per cent of doctors did not have desktops in pre-Covid-19 times. So, to foster digital adoption, proper education and training are essential.

Commenting on the accessibility of drugs in India, Atul Sharma, Founder & Managing Director, HealthScape, informed that manufacturing volumes in India have improved significantly after declining to 50-60 per cent in April 2020, given the strict lock-down. It rose to 60-80 per cent during May-June 2020, compared to April.

“In India, we have been in a reasonably good position in terms of the accessibility of drugs as it is easily available over the counter, compared to the eastern European countries,” he added.

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