

# Employee safety in pharma industry

As we develop more robust screening and testing, the safety of employees is paramount

The novel Corona virus outbreak has brought forth the importance of a robust healthcare and pharmaceutical industry in a country. As the 'Pharmacy of the World', India's role in providing medicines to countries across the globe throughout the pandemic was pertinent. However, the safety of the people has been of paramount importance to the pharmaceutical companies. The pharmaceutical industry worked with the government to ensure an uninterrupted supply of quality medicines in India and across the world.

The Corona virus pandemic gave birth to a whole new dimension of reverence and respect to the role of doctors, nurses and healthcare workers. The importance of employees engaged in essential services like pharmaceutical manufacturing activity and other related services have been recognised similar to medical professionals. These pharmaceutical professionals have been playing an important role in saving lives since the pandemic outbreak.

One of the most significant reasons that enabled continuous supply of medicines is the classification of the pharma manufacturing as an essential service by the government. Such a call to action compelled the need to act swiftly and promptly – both to ensure continuity of medicine supplies to avoid drug shortages, and at the same time, ensure the safety of the workforce in manufacturing facilities. Alongside the healthcare workers racing to contain the virus were those employed in the essential services – pharmaceutical manufacturing, supply chain staff and others who also braved the risk of Covid to secure the availability of medicines.

With the Government of India committed to ensure the safety of those employed in essential services, the pharmaceutical industry proactively initiated the formulation and implementation of best practices that will guarantee a safe environment for them to work in. While health and wellbeing of patients underlines the role of the industry, it equally translates into the quality of life of those working in it.

Although the employees across delivery systems, supply chain, pharmacists in the pharmaceutical sector worked together to put life above everything else, at that time dire need was felt for the implementation of consistent and comprehensive set of practices to ensure their health and safety. Every organisation has been initiating any measures as needed to keep employees safe. This laid the foundation for the formulation of 'Best Practices for Employee Safety in Pharmaceutical Manufacturing' document. Employee safety is vital for continued



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manufacturing operations during the pandemic.

With key insights towards preventive measures to minimise the risk of infection amongst employees, the best practices primarily ensured safety of the manufacturing and other personnel at the plant premises. These are sacrosanct in order to assure therapeutics to patients across therapy areas, especially those with co-morbidities. Patient centricity continues to be at its peak whilst ensuring uninterrupted supplies through continued manufacturing operations, without compromising personnel safety.

Care is being taken to ensure the workers are not exposed to any risks while on the premises. Employees have been encouraged to work from home, and those who are needed on-site, are working from office/site with due care being taken. Workers have also been provided with appropriate protective gear.

Companies have made secure common transport facilities available to their employees. Vehicles are being sanitized every day and deep-cleaned at regular intervals. On entering the premises, the workers undergo thermal screening on daily basis. They are required to wash their hands and hand-sanitizers have been placed in prominent places around the workplace as well. All the rooms and equipment undergo daily sanitization and deep clean.

Companies have also instituted suitable mitigation measures in place, in case an employee is tested positive for Covid-19. They are constantly working in tandem with the local authorities and healthcare providers to take immediate action. The company keeps in contact with local healthcare providers and authorities to monitor the situation and take appropriate action. These guidelines have been further advocated by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Government of India's Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) and have been diligently followed by the companies & manufacturing plants across the country.

As we develop more robust screening, testing and preventative measures, I strongly believe that the safety of employees is fundamental and will remain so in future. Companies will keep taking appropriate safety measures for the employees, their families and by extension, the patients as well.

As India races to effectively contain the infection, whilst searching for treatment and vaccines, the pandemic has reinforced India's commitment to maintain a continuous supply of medicines to its citizens and the world. ♦

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