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Business Practice, Quality & Compliance, COVID-19, Trends & Forecasts

COVID-19 and Beyond: Focusing on a Patient-centric Culture

Sudarshan Jain, Secretary General, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) discusses how the organization, along with its members, is working on adopting a more patient centric approach to manufacturing

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How have Indian drug developers responded to patient needs throughout the pandemic?

The pandemic has been a period of significant learning for the Indian industry. When a national lockdown was announced in early 2020, the government, pharmaceutical associations and industry leaders in India worked in an integrated manner to address the challenge of keeping the manufacturing operations and transportation working in order to maintain the uninterrupted supply of medicines. The industry also worked to ensure the safety of its employees and created safety protocols based on best

ensure the safety of its employees and created safety protocols based on best practices.

Put simply, the industry responded promptly – evaluating whether available drugs could be repurposed and exploring more innovative approaches to working. Importantly, during the second wave of pandemic, when the demand for medicines surged, Indian pharma companies maintained the resilience and agility of supply chains so that patient needs could be catered to. The key focus, throughout has been to

continuously upgrade systems and processes and supply quality medicines uninterrupted by keeping patient-centricity at the heart of all operations.

However, although the focus continues to be on COVID-19, and rightly so, the industry is working towards ensuring the continues availability of all life-saving medicines.

In what ways is the IPA encouraging patient-focused manufacturing?

The Indian pharma industry strives to cater to the end-to-end needs of patients – keeping in mind value chain complexities and evolving consumer behaviors. Larger Indian pharma companies, for example, have been transforming their cultural practices to be more quality intensive. Workshops, periodic training and internal forum discussions have all helped improve awareness about patient-centric approaches among employees at all levels. The IPA has also taken steps in ensuring that patients have access to high quality, affordable medicines thereby contributing to advancing public health outcomes in India.

We established a Quality Forum in 2015 to assist Indian pharmaceutical companies in meeting international quality requirements. The team, which comprises representatives from some of the biggest pharma companies, meets to develop guidelines and share best practises on major quality, manufacturing and regulatory concerns. Several reports on manufacturing, quality, inspections, and regulatory filings have been produced by the Forum over the years in line with the industry's vision of becoming a global leader in quality as well as delivering the best patient outcomes.

What will the future look like?

COVID-19 has reinforced that adopting a comprehensive patient-centric approach is

the future and with digitalization pervading the industry at a pace far faster than ever imagined, this shift will be much more immediate than imagined. The pandemic has underlined the importance of collaboration among stakeholders and demonstrated how well companies are able to respond to unprecedented challenges. Learning from the second wave, the industry is preparing proactively and intends to be ahead in terms of drug availability by building reserve stocks and inventory of essential drugs.

Ultimately the COVID-19 pandemic has been an excellent opportunity for learning. Rather than firefighting, the industry can begin to address long-term concerns across the value chain before they become significant challenges. If we can increase competition, improve quality, and stimulate innovation in the market, we will ultimately be able to deliver better patient outcomes.

[Click here to learn more about the IPA and its Secretary General](#)

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