

Industry Ready To Embrace Digitalization, Says IGBA

Chair Sudarshan Jain Confident Biosimilars Will Broaden Access For Chronic Diseases

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- **INTERVIEWS**

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Executive Summary

IGBA chair Sudarshan Jain has indicated that “companies are undergoing the change towards digital health,” in the second part of an exclusive interview with *Generics Bulletin* in which Jain and IGBA secretary general Suzette Kox talk about the pandemic-driven shift towards digitalization and computerization.

“We are entering into a digital model today,” said Sudarshan Jain, chair of the IGBA and secretary general of the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, in the second part of an exclusive interview with *Generics Bulletin*, as he indicated that “in fact, the commercial models of all the companies are undergoing the change towards digital health.”

After discussing issues around the global supply chain and lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic in the first part of the interview conversation turned to digitalization and the off-patent industry’s shift towards digital health.

IGBA Sets Out Industry Vision To 2030

Talking about the IGBA’s recent white paper setting out its vision to 2030 – that received input from Alvotech, Apotex, Aurobindo Pharma, Celltrion, Cimed, Dr Reddy’s Laboratories, Hikma, Insud Pharma, Intas Pharmaceuticals, Polpharma, Sandoz, Sawai Pharmaceutical, Sun Pharma and Teva (*see sidebar*) – IGBA secretary general Suzette Kox said, “when we did the interviews with the key industry leaders for our white paper, this digitalization move came out very strongly and I think that we will not go backwards anymore.”

She added, “so, companies will embrace [digitalization] more quickly. It will definitely happen.”

According to Jain, digitalization can help to better meet the demands of the patients and also improve the production and operations process. He explained that

information can be given to patients via webinars or different kinds of digital processes.

“There is a shortage of doctors around the world. So, telemedicine is becoming important,” said Jain. “During COVID-19, many patients were treated at home and oximeters entered into every home. I couldn't have imagined that one can manage a COVID-19 kind of a disease from home.”

He continued, “It is a fundamental shift that has taken place in the countries where the doctor-patient ratio is unbalanced. Telemedicine will become very important.”

When it comes to digitalization and computerization, Jain said that “a lot is happening” as far as research and development, as well as predictive analytics, are concerned.

Talking about the approval process, Jain said “there is no need to go through the physical process, computerized approvals are taking place across the world.” He added, “so there is adoption of technology across the world and this will stay going forward.”

EU, Indian And US Leaders Share Global Outlook To 2030

According to Jain, with increased adoption of technology across the world, physical meetings for approvals can be avoided as digitalization can lead to expedited regulatory processes.

Talking about digitalization from the regulatory side, Kox gave the example of digitalization in Europe where there is a shift towards electronic leaflets. She explained that there is active replacement of paper leaflets with e-leaflets in different languages and the effort has been accelerated due to COVID-19.

“There was also a situation during the pandemic, when there was a need for import and export licences for narcotic products,” said Kox. “And here again, digitalization helped accelerate that process. The problem was solved quickly thanks to digitalization.”

Biosimilars Will Broaden Access For Chronic Diseases

Moving on to the potential of biosimilars and how best to unlock it, Jain agreed that biosimilars would serve to broaden access for chronic diseases like rheumatoid arthritis. However, he said that to increase the access of generics and biosimilars for oncology and other chronic diseases, “patient sensitivity is important.”

In 2020, the US biosimilars market saw a transformative year in terms of opening up true multi-source competition on a number of key molecules, especially in oncology though significant hurdles around intellectual property and patent thickets remain. Acknowledging the challenges around biosimilars uptake in chronic diseases, Jain said, Cancer is one of the major causes of deaths around the world.” He insisted on education, awareness, increased doctor/patient compliance and better regulatory pathways for biosimilars for chronic diseases.

“Countries are in different stages of adoption of biosimilars, " added Kox. “So, of course, the measures needed to increase uptake are also going to differ. It's specifically because the price, reimbursements and the market environments are different.”

Kox added, “you cannot necessarily export one measure to another region or jurisdiction.”