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IAMAI urges government to finalize draft e-pharmacy rules

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The delay gives an opportunity to vested groups of distributors and retailers to spread misinformation



The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) representing leading e-pharma start-ups has urged the government to finalize the draft e-pharmacy rules and notify them immediately. In the absence of a set of clearly defined Rules, various groups with vested interests are approaching the courts and jeopardising 30 thousand livelihoods directly or indirectly employed in this sector and risking the health of 6 million consumers in 15,000 pin codes who were supplied during the Covid lockdown.

The delay in notification of the draft, e-pharmacy rules gives an opportunity to vested groups of distributors and retailers to spread misinformation in a manner that mutes competition and contributes to high drug prices in India. This has also been highlighted by Competition Commission of India (CCI) in their report October 2018, “Making markets work for affordable healthcare” which stated that these trade associations control the entire drug distribution system in a manner that mutes competition that contributes to high drug prices in India. Further one of the solutions proposed by the CCI was encouraging more e-Pharmacies. According to IAMAI, it is important to enable competition in the pharmaceutical supply chain.

It may be noted that the e-Pharmacy model operates in full compliance and harmony with existing laws. A digital platform receives the request for medicines from a patient along with the prescription and conveys it to a brick and mortar licensed pharmacy store that dispenses the medicine, fully governed under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act. e-Pharmacy Draft Rules Provides Sector-Specific e-Commerce regulations with the aim to harmonize existing laws/guidelines like the IT Act, D&C Act and Rules, and other relevant regulations. These draft rules came after over 25 multi-stakeholder consultations over a period of 4 years and have also been approved by Drug Technical Advisory Board, the highest expert body for Pharmaceutical regulation in India. The delays hereon are purely unjustified, and unfortunate, and seem to go in the opposite direction from the articulated vision of the Prime Minister for a Digital India where innovation thrives.

IAMAI has said that the sector needs urgent government support to notify the e-pharmacy draft rules which are pending since long. Notifying the rules will unleash the potential of technology to improve the access and affordability of quality medicines for the country.

The retail pharmacy sector needs a lot of supply chain, technology, and access solutions to make healthcare delivery more efficient and affordable, and a pre-requisite for this is a simple and clear regulatory pathway for innovation to thrive in this important space. IAMAI hopes that the issues being faced by the e-Pharmacy sector will now be addressed through a quick notification of the pending e-Pharmacy draft rules