

e-Pharmacy seek govt help for level playing field

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In the wake of growing harassment faced by entrepreneurs in the field of e-Pharmacy, the Indian Internet Pharmacy Association has sought support from regulators and the government.

Prashant Tandon, co-founder of 1mg.com, along with IIPC members has urged the government "to create a level playing field for the upcoming e-Pharmacy model to thrive". The e-Pharmacy business model has been in news for various reasons.

Maharashtra FDA recently lodged a complaint against PharmEasy, one of India's leading e-Pharmacy platform, however, police investigated the matter and come to the conclusion that there is was no violation of FDA rules and regulations, vindicating PharmEasy's stand.

Similarly, in Karnataka, the licences of Ziggy and Medidart were cancelled, and thereafter revoked post investigations. For Ziggy, the e-Pharmacy marketplace, the licence for a vendor partner in Bengaluru was cancelled. After several hearings with the Appellate Court, cancellation was revoked and operations found to be in good standing.

The new age retail pharmacies want to partner with digital platforms to develop and grow business; and investors have shown interest. However, the unprecedented and high-handed activity by AIOCD and Maharashtra FDA brought up serious questions around re-strengthening of 'license raj', and negative environment for innovation, especially in Maharashtra.

"Consumers are benefitting from increased transparency, access, affordability and convenience. The model also holds tremendous promise for the regulatory body to tackle issues of fake medicines since the supply chain is well documented and tracked and ensures better pharmaco vigilance," said IPA.

The IPA members have requested the sub-committee created by the 48th Drug Consultative Committee to formulate guidelines on the use of technology & e-Pharmacies. They have also suggested best practices from around the world to help draw a model system of pharmacy retail in India, and are keen to work with the regulator to draw a blueprint to address all the issues that plague this sector.