

## **International Forum on Patient Safety and Access to Safe Online Pharmacies In India Brings Together Public and Private Leaders from Around the World**

From March 1-2, 2017, the [Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies](#) (ASOP Global) brought together 160 key international stakeholders and local India partners for “Patient Safety and Access to Safe Online Pharmacies,” an international forum in New Delhi, India.

In addition ASOP Global’s Executive Director, Libby Baney, attendees and/or Forum speakers included representatives from the Government of India (GoI) officials; India Consumer Online Federation; U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention; Great Britain; Indonesia; France; INTERPOL; the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP); International Alliance of Patient Organizations (IAPO); International Institution of Research Against Counterfeit Medicines (IIRACM); PhRMA; Pharmaceutical Security Institute; Partnership for Safe Medicines (PSM) India Office; Digital Health Platform (an association of Indian Internet pharmacies); the U.S. Embassy; and WHO SEARO and WHO India Offices. Key topics covered during the symposium included:

- (1) India Initiatives on Safe Online Pharmacies
- (2) Findings of the India National Drug Survey 2017
- (3) International Safe Online Pharmacies Best Practices
- (4) Public Awareness for Safe Online Pharmacies
- (5) Third Party Private and Public Sector Cooperation
- (6) Application of the .pharmacy TLD in India
- (7) The Way Forward and Future Opportunities for Cooperation

ASOP Global also conducted sidebar meetings with the U.S. FDA India Office, India Office of Drug Controller General, IAPO, Partnership for Safe Medicines (PSM) India Office, Digital Health Platform, and WHO SEARO and WHO India Offices.

### **Moving Forward**

Prior to the event, GoI was considering changes to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act to permit online sale of prescription medicines following a crackdown by drug regulators against the sale of medicines through websites. Based on GoI’s statements at the Forum and beyond, all anticipate that the GoI soon establish new rules that explicitly authorize online sales of prescription medicines in India.

On March 16, 2017, India’s Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a public notice titled [Public Consultation Regarding Regulation of Sales of Drugs in the Country](#). This Notice covers online and offline sale of drugs. In addition, within the next six months GoI is planning to establish an e-portal for registration of manufacturers, wholesalers and online pharmacies. Online and offline regulations and requirements for the standard of patient care would be the same. The GoI plans for an e-portal have already been framed and put in the public domain for comments from all stakeholders as an outcome from the India Forum.

### **Conclusion**

As the GoI considers changes to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act to allow Indian patients to purchase prescription drugs through Internet websites, ASOP Global is hopeful that the GoI will implement best practices to promote consumer awareness and encourage cooperative activities with Internet, credit card and shipping companies so law enforcement and regulators ensure access to safe online pharmacies and take down websites selling illegal drugs.