

## **ASOP Global Urges DEA to Consider Risks to Patient Safety in Proposed Rule** *Telemedicine Prescribing Rule Likely to Drive Unsuspecting Consumers to Illegal Online Pharmacies*

Washington, DC, March 30, 2023 – The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global) has submitted public comments on the Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) Proposed Rule for Telemedicine Prescribing of Controlled Substances When the Practitioner and the Patient Have Not Had a Prior In-Person Medical Evaluation (Docket No. DEA-407). ASOP Global has studied and documented illegal online drug sales since 2009 and knows that despite DEA restrictions, illegal online pharmacies continued to offer controlled substances. We also know that patients buy from unknown, unlicensed internet drug sellers for cost, convenience, and access to care.

In response to the proposed reinstatement of restrictions on telemedicine prescriptions of controlled substances May 11th, we fear that many Americans will lose access to appropriate medical treatments that include controlled substance prescriptions and consequently will turn to illegal online sources for controlled substances they can no longer access through their telemedicine-only provider and U.S. licensed pharmacies. As a result, many will likely receive counterfeit or substandard products, putting their health at serious risk. ASOP Global's comments call the DEA's attention to this foreseeable public health crisis and emphasize the importance of educating the public and addressing the threats imposed by illegal online drug sellers.

Numerous studies show that patients took advantage of state and federal waiver authorities allowing greater telehealth access during the pandemic. When delivered by responsible, appropriately licensed healthcare providers, telehealth can be a powerful tool for improving patient adherence and outcomes, particularly for mental health and substance use disorders.

The DEA is uniquely positioned to help mitigate the health risks patients will face after reinstating restrictions on prescribing controlled substances via telemedicine consultations. In the interest of patient safety, we encourage DEA to partner with patient safety organizations, such as ASOP Global, and local law enforcement, to proactively warn Americans about the public health threats of buying from unverified sources online.

ASOP Global and its members have a long history of educating patients and healthcare providers on the risks of illegal online pharmacies and how to stay safe. The [Bad Meds campaign](#) launched in 2022 in collaboration with the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, LA County Sheriff, LA PD, U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security & Investigations, and Crimestoppers. The campaign's public service announcement features actor Danny Trejo and provides resources through its website to educate consumers about the dangers of buying from illicit and online sources. We welcome the opportunity to partner with DEA on a similar nationwide campaign.

###

### **ABOUT ASOP GLOBAL**

*The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global), a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., with activities in U.S., Canada, Europe, Latin America and Asia, is dedicated to protecting consumers around the world, ensuring safe access to medications, and combating illegal online drug sellers.*