

Brief Communication

Impact of COVID-19 on Indian Pharmaceutical sales industry

Hemasri velmurugan¹, Himanshu Nirmal chandu², Pugazhenthath Thangaraju^{3*}

¹Junior resident, Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

²Senior Pharmacist, Central Pharmacy, AIIMS Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

³Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

*Corresponding author - Dr. Pugazhenthath Thangaraju, MBBS., MD., DNB., MNAMS., MBA.,

Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Email: drpugal23@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Pandemic COVID-19 totally changed the drug manufacturing, logistic and availability in the tertiary care centre. We have focussed on the industry perspectives in the setting of our Indian scenario.

Keywords: COVID-19, sales, strategy, Pharma

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a global pandemic on March 11th, 2020.¹ As part of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) cross contaminations are avoided and good care for the medicine related properties are given by the Pharmaceutical Industry.² Currently, the government has to meet the needs of COVID-19 pandemic along with the support and help of the pharmaceutical industry. They together planned and revised management protocol for balancing medicines supply chain. Currently, in lack of definitive treatment for COVID-19 and pharmaceutical sectors main goal is to maintain natural market flow and to access essential medicines at an affordable price¹.

Pharmaceutical Industry Before And After COVID-19

Before COVID-19 : Nearly 19 billion dollars of pharmaceuticals were exported from India to more than 200 countries in the year between 2018 and 2019. Comparing to United states (US), Indian firms had meet 40% of the generic demand and a quarter of that on comparing to Europe. For more than 5000 medical products and devices have a combined abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) market authorization with 50 Indian firms. Almost, more than 70% of the bulk drugs were imported from China to India. Due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, pharmaceutical drug production and supplies

to hospitals are under pressure. India's export potential and production capacity are already affecting the pharmaceutical sector in a notable manner. It becomes a complex international challenge due to global dependence on Indian generics in this time of COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, India resolves for 12% of all manufacturing sites serving to the US pharmaceutical sectors.⁴

After COVID-19 : This global pandemic is affiliated with lots of short and long-term effects on the pharmaceutical industries which will be apparent from both global and local point of view.

Short-term impacts

1) Medication Shortage: There is an increase of requirement of medicines used in hospitals for COVID-19 example sedatives, analgesics, etc. and also there is demand for medical devices like pulse oximeters, ventilators, etc. Due to these kind of shortage of medicines and medical devices in the COVID-19 pandemic affected the health market badly. The medical equipment supplies can be given emergency licenses for the online transportation and communication receiving those within one business day. But the pharmaceutical sector is less sensitive to this medication shortage.¹

• **Induced demand and panic buying:** The public started to buy medication in demand, which is known as "panic buying", will further

lead to shortage of drugs in the pharmaceutical industry especially in case of people taking medicines for chronic illness like diabetes mellitus, cholesterol control, motion sickness, thyroid disorders, migraine, hypertension, etc.

• **Supply chain disruption:** World widely, the supply of pharmaceuticals products is likely to be delayed and the effect on global access to medicine will have dramatic consequences.⁴

Due to quarantine and lockout situations in several countries, least human resources at the working level affecting the output capacity largely. The chain has disrupted further and delayed supplies due to impact on transport & cargo operations. Newer innovations should come up and drift the overall pharmaceutical industry.

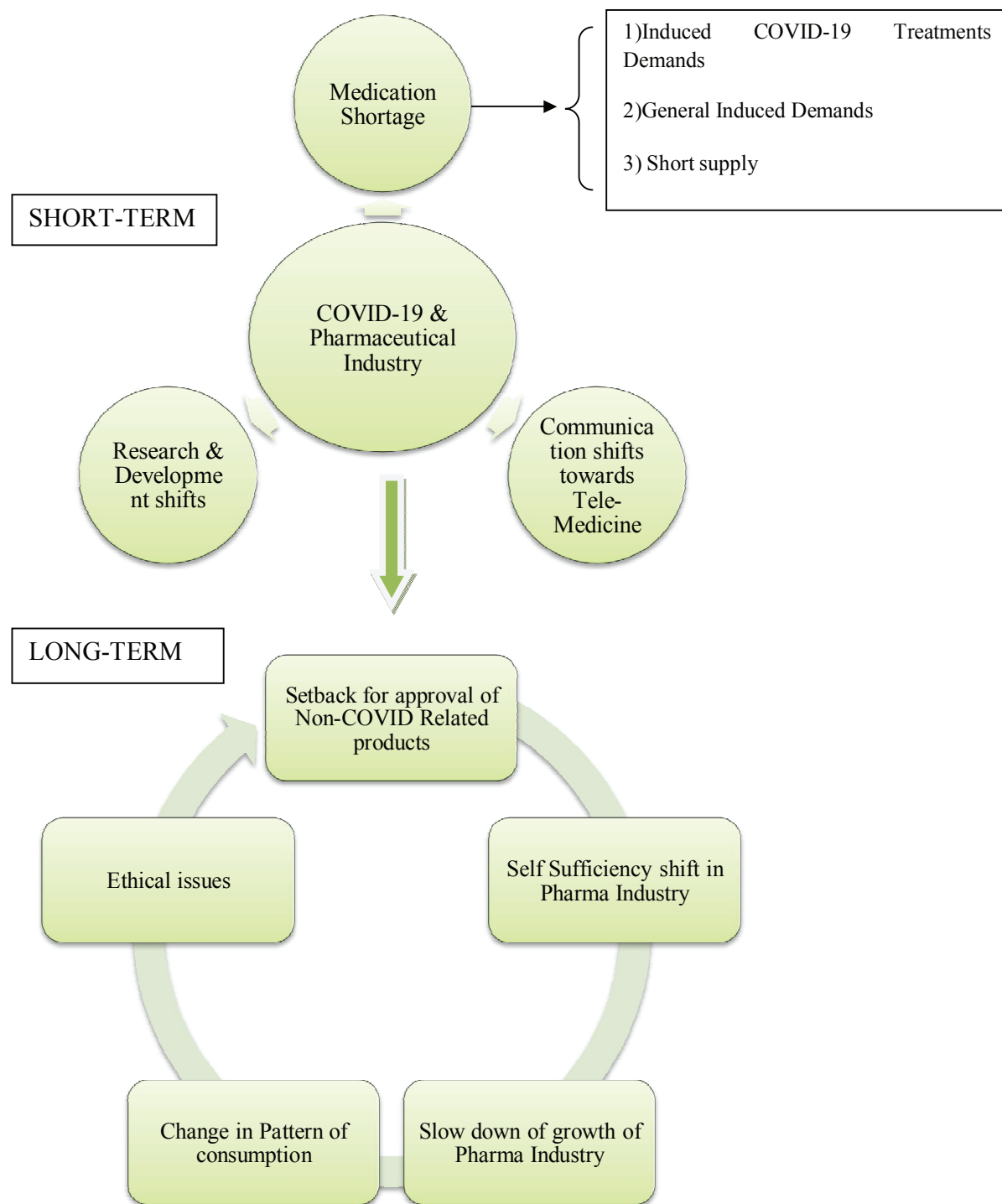


Fig 1: Communication drifts and increased interactions through tele-communication and tele-health:

Maintaining social distancing in the field of pharmaceutical industry makes it difficult for promoting and marketing the health-care products to providers. Their work is being drifted from person-to-person to network communication and tele-communications for both advancement and supporting the activity of patients.¹

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Long-term impacts

1. Setback for approval of Non-COVID Related products: As the world is focusing mainly on COVID-19 treatment there is delay in approval for future drug production and be seen due to certain months of delay of review of applications.

2. Self Sufficiency shift in Pharmaceutical Industry: Banning of export supplies from countries like India and China who were the main contributors in the medical supply of drugs and devices for several other countries globally. This leads to drug shortage and self-sufficiency shift in Pharmaceutical Industry.

3. Slow-down of growth of Pharmaceutical Industry: During this pandemic, slow-down of growth of pharmaceutical industry in some countries will result in economical slow-down of many other countries. This is surely due to introduction of many other new drugs in the industry.

4. Ethical issues: Due to effect of COVID-19, there is slow-down of economies, losses in the marketing and business field. There are many people without jobs and faces lots of ups and downs in their lifestyle.³ Ethical clearance is must for the off-label use of drugs. For consideration of new therapies and theories, there is need of informed and valid decisions as these treatment protocols can cause side-effects in the upcoming years. Thus, they should be examined first before using in clinical practice. Even though in this pandemic there are many studies and trials are in progress in which some were publicized. As a result of public and competitive pressures there will be large profits from the use of newly developed drug and drug products will face high scrutiny in this pandemic.³

5. Change in Pattern of consumption: The people started adapting their normal habits

with these refilling prescriptions, especially in chronic illness. But, most were affected by the emerging tele-medicine. Now, people used to follow personal hygiene maintenance by nose/mouth protection, disinfection products for environment and clothing and hand sanitizers. Both globally and locally, most of the people used to adapt in this situation.¹

Covid and failure of drug marketing

The effect of business on COVID-19 pandemic can disturb the production and supply of drug products and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). There will be problem in terms of costs among the pharmaceutical industry. Lockdown in China and European Union (EU) limit the drug supplies to the other countries. As APIs imports from Indian manufacturers have been a major cost advantage for many pharmaceutical companies globally. The consumers are affected badly by the increasing the overall costs to global manufacturers and importers. At working level, there is slow-down process due to social distancing, continuously wearing face masks, sanitization, minimum workforce etc. All this are the reasons for decrease in productivity.²

Battle of pharma industry

Delay in clinical trials: Due to the coronavirus outbreak, ongoing clinical trials and studies undergoing are delayed. This could often result in deviations from the already approved study plan. Before starting any new clinical study or including new study participants, they must be evaluated by the sponsors. Sponsors should also expect to evaluate the extent to which they can temporarily suspend the study in certain facilities and/or extend the overall duration of the study. Pharmaceutical companies must analyze the probable impact of the pandemic on their upcoming or on-going clinical trials and notify at an early stage to submit amendments or clarify uncertainties.⁵

Barriers to accelerated digital transformation

Pharmaceutical and medical device companies are being expected to expedite their digital transformation process. This results in increasing need to enable remote consultations for medical professionals and also to enable sales and advertising outside healthcare premises. However, the digital approach raises several concerns, related to data protection. New digital approaches are initiated by pharmaceutical and medical device companies and get support by healthcare professionals. They also must be checked for compliance with existing

applicable drug advertising, social, and professional laws and regulations.⁵

Lengthy market entry regulations for PPE

Medical equipment in Personal protective equipment (PPE) kit consists of goggles, gloves, masks and gowns. Products which are qualified in this category often require lengthy conformity evaluation and assessment before their entry in the market. Shocking there is more demand for these products in the market and the European Union (EU) has now simplified the market entry process for PPE to an appreciable extent. The market surveillance authorities are under pressure to take measures to provide timely access to medical devices and PPE for healthcare professionals during the prevailing healthcare crisis.⁵

Pharmaceutical support in this crisis

- AstraZeneca (AZ) Company donated 9 million face masks to several countries in this pandemic situation and has also initiated various trials on diagnostic measures.

- Due to this pandemic many insulin-dependent diabetics are under trouble for getting their life saving drugs. These patients received support from Eli Lilly with an advertisement in several United States newspapers for showing how they can get help and support in this unstable time.

- For COVID-19 patient, Bayer donated 3 million Resochin (chloroquine) tablets to the United States government. Even though it is not yet approved in the US.

- 130 million doses of hydroxychloroquine is donated by Novartis.

- Pfizer's exceeded its hands with Biotech for production of COVID-19 vaccine.

Source of funding: Nil

Conflicts of interest: Nil

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- The granted orphan drug Remdesivir had positive results in animal trial given Compassionate Use Program (CUP) status by Gilead and become one of the most wanted drugs to help people with coronavirus crisis.³

Suggestions to overcome

The coronavirus pandemic is, first and foremost, an urgent health crisis affecting countless people around the globe. The Pharmaceutical industry needs to get knowledge about the spread of the disease and its transmission in the community for better management. This helps to manufacture various drug products as well as research activities for developing vaccines & other products to fight against the COVID-19 crisis.² There should also be a proper planning to overcome the short-term effects and long-term side effects with appropriate data-analysis. The effects should be identified and reported which will be useful for making policy guidance to defeat the associated challenges. This may be more valuable in terms of health resources for developing countries like India.¹

Conclusion

Large scale production of the pharmaceutical goods and devices will need help and support from the whole pharmaceutical industry. Indian firm's capacity and their involvement in the production of pharmaceutical products will be critical for the rest of the world as well as India for returning to normal position after this pandemic. Globally, India should get its support from the Governments and other international organizations who rely on India for their supplies.⁴ For the betterment of people health, the Pharmaceutical Industries are working continuous for manufacture medicines. Therefore, it is mandatory to take all needful measures to take care of ourselves as well as others in the surrounding. We all have to learn for facing this COVID-19. Simple preventive measures and planning can make a major difference and change in the world.²

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