

A Study on Impact of Ethics in Marketing with Reference to Pharmaceutical Drugs Production

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"Ethics is knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong"

Abstract

Pharmacists as one of health-care providers face ethical issues in terms of pharmaceutical care, relationship with patients and cooperation with the health-care team. Other than pharmacy, there are pharmaceutical companies in various fields of manufacturing, importing or distributing that have their own ethical issues. Therefore, pharmacy practice is vulnerable to ethical challenges and needs special code of conducts. Code of conduct was subject to comments of all experts involved in the pharmaceutical sector and thus criticized in several meetings; prepared code of conduct is comprised of professional code of ethics for pharmacists, ethics guideline for pharmaceutical manufacturers, ethics guideline for pharmaceutical importers, ethics guideline for pharmaceutical distributors, and ethics guideline for policy makers. This study aspires to scientifically explore ethics in pharmaceutical marketing through the prism of stakeholder marketing. A single theme emerged after the highest abstraction which is "Contemporary Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices" with four categories such as promotional campaigns, products inducements, inappropriate marketing strategies, and concealing drugs-related adverse effects. Document was compiled based on the principles of bioethics and professionalism. He compiling the code of ethics for the national pharmaceutical system is the first step in implementing ethics in pharmacy practice and further attempts into teaching the professionalism and the ethical code as the necessary and complementary effort are highly recommended. It is a secondary data. I got the information from various sources like books, journals, networks, etc.

Keywords: *Pharmaceuticals, pharmacy ethics, pharmacy professionalism, Ethical Marketing, and Codes of Ethics.*

Introduction

Marketing is integral part of pharmaceutical industry. It is responsible to deliver the pharmaceuticals related communications to target audiences. Pharmaceutical marketing is unique in nature because the consumers are not the target customers but doctors who make the decision for them (patients). Marketing has a significant contribution to the socioeconomic uplift of society. However, the contemporary marketing practices violate the code of ethics and choose profits over preserving the social values, thus, the long term benefits of community are compromised. Pharmaceutical marketing is also blameworthy of over marketing and not take in to considerations the vulnerability of other stakeholders like patients.

Ethical issues at the interface between the medical profession and the pharmaceutical industry have generally been approached from the vantage point of medical professionalism, with a focus on conflict of interest as the key ethical concern. Although conflicts of interest remain important, other ethical issues may be obscured unless a wider perspective is adopted. Besides medical professionalism, the ethics of the clinical therapeutic relationship, ethics of public health, and business ethics all provide additional insights.

The stakeholder theory and stakeholder marketing is vitally important in pharmaceutical industry. The theory was developed by Freeman in 1984 which emphasize on the centrality of stakeholders rather than shareholders to incorporate sustainability in marketing theory and praxis. It is an enlightened and instrumental approach which lead to good performance of the organizations provide best practices to managed the primary (shareholders, marketers, physicians, patients, employees, stockholders, etc.) and secondary (community, environment, future generations, animal species, etc.) However, this conceptualization is substantially marginalized in the marketing strategies and practices of pharmaceutical companies particularly in developing countries.

The industry-physicians relationships are translated into violation of medical ethics and hurt professional integrity of physicians. The marketing practices are in a conflict with ethical promotions of pharmaceutical in Pakistan. Transgression in the form of illicit marketing practices and fraud is reported in and outside the United States of America and against the very principles and goals of public health. The industry is involved in altering evidence-based medicine which not only results in therapy failure and increased cost but causing iatrogenic diseases like antibiotic resistance and violate the principles of stakeholder marketing. There are multiple factors responsible for the drug abuse and overuse but predominantly, over-emphasis on drug benefits, concealing medical studies results or withholding data which are against the commercial objectives of the intended products. Nevertheless, the centrality of stakeholders can't be neglected in business practices in this age of information.

Pharmaceutical industry is associated with several stakeholders including primary (shareholders, marketers, physicians, patients, employees, stockholders, etc.) and secondary (community, environment, future generations, animal species, etc.) which have stakes in the organizations. Managers are agents of stakeholders which not only allocate resources to the activities including marketing programs to generate profits. These decisions affect all stakeholders and the entire ecosystem. However, potential conflict of interest arises as they have different interests in the firms. When one stakeholder becomes threat for the other then social contracts among them are violated. In the conceptualization of pharmaceutical marketing, the interest of physicians, patients, marketers and shareholders are different but looking through the prism of stakeholders marketing, they are interconnected. However, the capitalist perspective has put hold in the industry practices.

Objectives of the Study

1. How key stakeholders perceived the commercial practices of pharmaceutical marketing.
2. What are the effects of pharmaceutical marketing on different stakeholders.
3. How ethics plays a role in marketing.

Methodology

It is a secondary data. I got the information from various sources like books, journals, networks, etc. So, this paper is an attempt to highlight the past, present and future trends of ethics in marketing.

Contemporary Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices

Pharmaceutical industry is a vibrant and tightly scrutinized sector due to its prominent role in providing unique cures to patients with associated adverse effects. It is noteworthy that the industry unable to properly manage and engage the proximal and distal stakeholders equitably and justifiably. The marketers interact with physicians, hospitals directors, and purchase authorities with the aim to win their sympathies and support in purchases. However, executing promotional activities within the ambit of codes of ethics has been the topic of discussion among academia.

Promotional Campaigns

The informants of this study revealed that multinational companies have an appropriate compliance with ethics in conducting the promotional practices. But the local industry is involved in corrupting the medical professionals and they offer a variety of gifts, services, and personal obligations. Physicians are of the view that materialistic thinking has been instigated by the marketing practices of pharmaceutical industry. The previous literature also supports this concept because the capitalist values like materialism, profitability, and self-interest are the products of modern marketing.

Promotional Practices of Pharmaceutical Industry

- Multinational companies are fair and transparent in their marketing to physicians
- The indigenous industry promote malpractices and even offer bribing .
- Drug Regulatory Authority has developed ethical guidelines but compliance of the industry is very poor.
- Purchase of antibiotics and other controlled drugs over-the-counter should be circumvented to minimize the misuse and overuse of pharmaceuticals.
- Commercial objectives have got primacy over social and human values.
- The pharmaceutical marketing adherence to corporate social responsibilities, Malpractices of marketers have a direct influence on prescribing habits of physicians.

Products Inducement

Financial and other attractions are attached with pharmaceuticals to encourage bulk purchases and uses. However, overuse and misuse of drugs are directly linked with undesirable side effects particularly drug addiction and antibiotic resistance. Physicians are rewarded on frequent prescription in the form of personal obligations like recreational and pleasure local and foreign tours, sponsorship for continued medical education, free meals, gifts, and free samples. Products inducements increased sales and profits but equally escalate malpractices. The overuse and misuse of drugs is manifested in the form of iatrogenic diseases like antibiotic resistance and substance abuse. The douceurs connectivity with products like pharmaceuticals may achieve financial goals of the firms but against the medical ethics and societal wellbeing. Consequently, the drug related adverse effects are on the rise and the industry is under intense scrutiny from legislative and surveillance bodies.

Inappropriate Marketing Strategies

The preponderance of drug promotion for the prescription medications is very common in the industry. The promotional campaigns are designed according to the buying behaviours of physicians. There is intense competition for grabbing market share among firms. It is important to consider the ethical promotion of drugs which has serious repercussions on physicians' prescription habits and the development of drug resistance. The unethical promotion and its public health consequences are substantially larger when examined through the prism of stakeholder marketing perspective. However, awareness, policy perspective, and economic conditions are the contributing factors in antimicrobial resistance.

Inappropriate Marketing Strategies

- Existing marketing strategies of industry are unethical and unscrupulous.
- Pharmaceutical companies involved in inappropriate promotional activities.
- Unnecessary prescriptions and overuse and misuse of antibiotic are causing antimicrobial resistance.
- Sales pressures from top management may lead to the misuse of drugs.
- Industry focuses more on marketing than other things to earn profits.

Concealing Drugs Related Adverse Effects

The drug related adverse effects are associated with each medicine because they consist of active chemical compounds which react with others in the body. In medical studies, there are always bad news associated with them which is buried by the industry. The results and data conducted on drugs are not published in academic journals as they do not produce the required conclusions. The prescription drugs are also called as ethical drugs because they are directly communicated to physicians to obtain their support in medicine dispensing. The financial performance may be affected by side-stepping the associated bad news with drugs. The promotional activities have a greater impact on physicians' prescription habits rather than clinical evidences. The informants of this study revealed that promotional activities on doctors have increased prescribing rates, irrational prescribing behaviours, and prescription of expensive and specific brands. However, the under-reporting of side effects which are sometimes lethal for patients is a scientific misconduct which is commensurable with previous studies.

Concealing Drugs Related Adverse

- More emphasis on products benefits rather than side effects.
- The marketers dramatized products features and benefits.
- They over-market the drugs which is detrimental. Pharmaceutical drug promotion neglects important aspects of medicine, more focus on commercial objectives rather than well-being.
- The social contract between patients and physicians is undermined by misleading marketing in industry.

Notwithstanding, the preponderance of unethical marketing practices in the industry compels physicians to focus on the commercial objectives and put aside the larger the interest of society and community. The incorporation of stakeholder marketing perspective may accentuate patients and the environment and foreground a renewed direction to the discipline. The model is a rational one where the marketing practices of the pharmaceutical industry can be examined from the promotional campaigns, products inducement, marketing strategies, and concealing the drug related adverse reactions point of view to explore ethical backgrounds of these dimensions.

Inappropriate marketing strategies search for the loopholes in the medical professionals and then accordingly design tactical plans to persuade them for prescriptions' writing. The prescriptions were written for patients are inappropriate and irrational and increase the overuse of the drug and misuse. The findings of this study are also consistent with the previous literature. The commercial interests of some stakeholders particularly marketers and healthcare professionals hamper the rational medications.

The marketers undisclosed the drug related adverse effects; omit the risks associated with drugs; and misrepresenting drugs by false claiming of superior quality although the evidences indicate modest efficacy. This behaviour need to incorporate the stakeholder marketing perspective in which all stakeholders are consider as interconnected and their need must be satisfied justifiably. In traditional marketing, the focus is on those stakeholders who contribute value to the organization and it put customers first because they are the primary revenues generator.

In the context of the pharmaceutical industry, prime importance is given to healthcare professionals, marketers, and to some extent distribution channels who are the principal contributors to the sale revenues while patients and the community are pushing behind. Another important aspect is that traditional marketing treat stakeholders independently while stakeholder marketing considers them as interrelated.

Stakeholder marketing recognizes that all stakeholders of pharmaceutical firms are interconnected and they must be treated simultaneously otherwise the relationships may be distorted if not respected. The existing social media channels and other sources of information have kept their interconnectedness. The heterogeneity and divergent interests should be deemed as strengths for the organization. Doctor, patients need quality and safe medications at reasonable prices; shareholders want profits; physicians desire to receive updated information with better services; and community and environment essentially demand for friendly products and practices that guarantee protection to them.

Examples of Unethical Marketing Practices That Can Destroy your Reputation

Making False, Exaggerated, or Unverified Claims

In a desperate bid to compel potential and existing customers to buy their products or services, some marketers use false statements, exaggerated benefits, or make unverifiable claims about their offers. This is common in the weight loss industry, where marketers convince potential buyers that a particular product can help them shed so-and-so pounds within two weeks without exercise or dieting!

Distortion of facts to mislead or confuse potential buyers

This is another common unethical marketing practice. A typical example is when a food processing company claims that its products are sugar-free or calorie-free when indeed they contain sugar or calories. Such a company is only trying to mislead potential buyers, since they are unlikely to buy the products if it is made known that they contain sugar or calories.

Plagiarism of marketing messages

Though uncommon, some business owners and salespersons engage in using the exact marketing messages of their competitors to market their own products or services. Creativity is a huge part of marketing, and using other businesses' marketing messages just passes you off as being creatively bankrupt and fraudulent.

Exploitation

This is charging for much more than the actual value of a product or service. For marketing efforts to remain with ethical limits; the prices of your offers must be equal to or less than the value they give the buyer. If the value is less than the cost, it's unethical.

Demearing References to Races, Age, Sex, or Religion

Ethical marketing must be devoid of all forms of discrimination. If your marketing messages contain lines that place people of certain age range, sex, religion, nationality, or race at a higher level than others, then you are crossing the bounds of ethical marketing.

Spamming

Spamming is when you send unsolicited emails to potential customers, encouraging them to buy your products or services. This is the commonest unethical marketing practice done online. The number of time you send such emails doesn't matter. Whether you send them once, or on occasions, or frequently, you remain a spammer.

Using Fear Tactics

This is another common unethical marketing practice among snake oil salespersons. You will hear them saying something like: "This price is a limited-time offer. If you don't buy now, you might have to pay much more to buy it later because the offer will end up in two days' time, and the price will go up."

Using Women as Sex Symbols for Advertising

The rate at which even reputable brands are resorting to this unethical marketing practice is quite alarming. If you observe TV, billboard, and magazine adverts, there's something common to most of them; a half-naked lady is used to attract attention to the product or service being advertised.

Bad-Mouthing Rival Products

Emphasizing the dark sides of your rival's products in a bid to turn potential customers towards your own products is another common but unethical marketing practice. Rather than resort to this bad strategy, you should emphasize on those aspects that make your offer stand out from the rest of the pack. That's professional and ethical.

Ethical Issues in the Pharmaceutical Industry

In many businesses, the goal is to sell a product to satisfy demand. A certain company's objective is to gain profit without breaking the laws of the land. This is generally accepted in the world of business and rarely raises questions on ethics.

Ethics is a set of moral principles that affect how people make decisions and lead their lives. It is concerned with what is morally good and bad in the world. And even though putting profit first is a common scenario in several businesses, there are industries in which social welfare is expected to be prioritized over profit.

The pharma industry is one of them. However, in recent decades, we have seen this industry fail over and over again in upholding its ethical responsibility to the public. Ironically, an industry that's responsible for people's health and wellbeing has major problems with its ethical practices.

Drug Pricing

Several price gouging incidents took the pharmaceutical world by storm. One instance was in 2016 when Mylan Laboratories hiked EpiPen prices by almost 600% in less than a decade.

EpiPen is the brand name of a medical device used for injecting the drug epinephrine. It is a life-saving medication used in emergencies to treat very serious allergic reactions to insect bites, foods, and other drugs. A sharp increase in EpiPen's price between 2009 and 2019 sparked outrage. A set of EpiPens, then sold for around \$100, now costs \$600.

The incident also prompted debate over whether the pharmaceutical company acted unethically. Because as it turns out, aside from drug price increases, Mylan also cemented the market dominance of EpiPen by expanding its marketing efforts for epinephrine as a whole. The company's CEO, Heather Bresch, blamed the price gouging on American healthcare.

As with several other pharma execs before her, she argued that the profit goes into research and development for the drug as well as product marketing. Here's the catch, though: epinephrine, the drug administered by Mylan's EpiPen, is the same drug that has been used for the treatment of allergic reactions for decades.

The cost of drugs is a major and rapidly rising component of health-care expenditures. We survey recent literature on the ethics and economics of skyrocketing pharmaceutical prices and find that advances in economic research have increased the sharpness and focus of the ethically based calls to increase access by modifying patent protection and reducing prices. In some cases, research supports ethical arguments for broader access. Other research suggests that efforts to broaden access result in unintended consequences for innovation and the medical needs of patients. Both ethicists and economists need to be more cognizant of the real clinical settings in which physicians practice medicine with real patients. Greater cross-disciplinary interaction among economists, ethicists, and physicians can help reduce the disjunction between innovation and access and improve access and patient care. This dialogue will impact private industry and may spur new multi stakeholder paradigms for drug discovery, development, and pricing.

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Process - Steps, Tools, and Considerations:

The pharmaceutical industry is an essential component of health care systems throughout the world. It is made up of both public and private organizations that discover, develop, manufacture, and market medicines. The pharmaceutical industry is based mainly upon scientific research and the development of drugs that prevent or treat diseases and disorders. Modern scientific and technological advances are quickening the discovery and expansion of innovative pharmaceuticals with improved therapeutic activity and fewer side effects. Molecular biologists, medicinal chemists, and pharmacists all work to improve the benefits of drugs through increased potency and specificity.

Drug manufacturing is the process of industrial-scale creation of pharmaceutical drugs by pharmaceutical companies. The means of drug manufacture can be broken down into a series of unit operations. Milling, granulation, coating, and tablet pressing are all potential parts of the process.

Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Steps

In continuous manufacturing, raw materials and energy feed into the system at a constant rate, and at the same time, a continual extraction of output products is achieved. The process performance is heavily dependent on the stability of the material flowrate. For powder-based continuous processes, it is essential to feed powders consistently and accurately into the successive processes in the line, as feeding is characteristically the first step in manufacturing. Feeders are designed to achieve performance reliability, feed rate accuracy, and minimal interruptions.

With pharmaceutical manufacturing, a wide range of non-active ingredients may be blended with the active pharmaceutical ingredient or ingredients to create the final blend used for the solid dosage form. The range of materials that may be combined presents many variables that must be addressed. These variables include the particle size distribution, the particle form (spheres, rods, cubes, plates, etc.), the presence of moisture, particle surface properties such as roughness and cohesion, and powder flow properties.

During the manufacturing process, milling is often obligatory to reduce the average particle size in a drug powder. There are several reasons for this, including increasing homogeneity and dosage uniformity and increasing the solubility of the drug compound. Sometimes repeated powder blending followed by milling occurs to improve the manufacturability of the blends.

There are two general types of granulation: wet granulation and dry granulation. Granulation can be seen as the opposite of milling. Small particles are connected to form larger particles called granules. Granulation is used for several reasons. It prevents the "demixing" of components in the mixture, by creating a granule which contains all of the ingredients in their required proportions, which improves flow characteristics of powders and increases compaction properties for tablet formation.

Hot melt extrusion is used in pharmaceutical solid oral dose processing to enable the delivery of drugs with poor solubility and bioavailability. Hot melt extrusion has been shown to disperse poorly soluble drugs in a polymer carrier molecularly. The procedure encompasses the application of heat, pressure, and agitation to mix materials and 'extrude' them through a tool die. Twin-screw high shear extruders blend materials and break up particles at the same time. The resultant particles can be combined and compressed into tablets or filled into capsules.

Labs may use dry ice to cool drugs for reaction selectivity, but this cooling process becomes complicated if used at an industrial size. The cost of cooling a typical reactor to this temperature is high, and the viscosity of the reagent can increase as the temperature lowers, leading to difficult mixing. This causes the added expense of stirring harder and replacing parts more often, or it leads to a non-homogeneous reaction.

Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Tools

The pharmaceutical industry has precise requirements and manufacturing guidelines. As a result, pharmaceutical manufacturing equipment must comply with good manufacturing practices. Pharmaceutical manufacturing equipment includes an extensive range of equipment, such as capsule filling machines, x-ray inspection systems, tablet punches, and spray drying accessories. Almost every

process can be automated to ensure precise manufacturing and formulation development. The result of automation is that there is a piece of pharmaceutical manufacturing equipment involved in every step.

Solid and liquid ingredients are mixed in compounding operations to produce solutions, syrups, suspensions, pastes, and ointments. Contained process equipment and transfer systems should be used in the compounding of highly hazardous materials. Buffering agents, detergents, and antiseptics may be dangerous to workers. Eyewashes and safety showers help minimize injuries if workers accidentally contact corrosive or irritating substances. Because of the wet surfaces in compounding areas, workers need to be protected from electrical hazards of equipment and utilities. Burns and falls are prevented by the installation of insulation on hot surfaces and maintaining dry non-slip floors. Safety equipment is just as essential to the drug manufacturing process.

Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Considerations

Synthesis operations pose many worker health and safety hazards. They include moving machine parts, pressurized equipment and pipes, and the heavy manual handling of materials and equipment. More potential risks are steam, hot liquids, heated surfaces, and hot workplace environments. Confined spaces, hazardous energy sources, and high noise levels can all be dangerous

Exposure to hazardous chemicals during synthesis operations may result in chronic health risks for workers. Chemicals with severe health effects can damage the eyes and skin, be corrosive or irritating to body tissues or cause suffocation or oxygen deficiency. Chemicals with chronic health effects can cause cancer or damage the liver, kidneys, lungs, or other organ systems if mishandled. The implementation of appropriate control measures (for example, process modifications, engineering controls, and administrative practices, personal and respiratory protective equipment) helps to limit health and safety hazards.

Organic synthesis reactions may create significant process safety risks from highly hazardous materials, fire, explosion, or uncontrolled chemical reactions that impact the public around the plant. Process safety can be very complex with organic synthesis. Examining the dynamics of chemical reactions, along with the properties of highly hazardous materials, helps with safety. The training of operating and engineering staff in emergency preparedness and in their response to the facility and the local community is also helpful. There are companies that specialize in process hazard analysis to reduce the risks of chemical synthesis operations. It's essential to take every precaution to ensure workers' health and safety when manufacturing pharmaceuticals.

Conclusion

This study explores ethics in the contemporary pharmaceutical marketing practices with the lens of stakeholder marketing perspective. The importance of stakeholders in the pharmaceutical industry is manifold and their equitable engagement is critical for the growth and progress of the industry. The socially responsible firms engage the proximal as well as the distal stakeholders without considering their role in financial performance.

Notwithstanding, the contemporary marketing practices of pharmaceutical companies are less ethical and more unscrupulous and illicit and can lead to inappropriate prescription behaviours in physicians, stimulate unnecessary purchases from hospitals directors, and increase consumption through patients which iatrogenic diseases like drug addictions and antibiotic resistance. The data gleaned from the

informants through in-depth interviews revealed that the existing marketing practices of the industry have crossed the thin line between ethical and non-ethical conducts.

Pharmaceutical marketing design promotional campaigns that focus on physicians, hospitals directors, and pharmacists to generate prescriptions from the former and bulk purchases and drug dispensing respectively from the latter. The study revealed that multinational pharmaceutical companies are doing ethical practices and persuade physicians on robust evidence-based while the national firms are engaging them in personal obligations and drug incentivization to increase drugs patronization. In this context, the ethical issues associated with drug promotion are the contributing factor in inappropriate prescription, thereby causing antibiotic resistance.

This has a significant influence on the prescribing habits of physicians. They write inappropriate prescriptions to patients which thereby lead to antimicrobial resistance.

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