

Govt may bring pharma marketing under statutory ethics law

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The department of pharmaceuticals may soon consider formulating a statutory framework to enforce a uniform code of pharmaceuticals marketing practices, said two people familiar with the plan. The department believes existing voluntary guidelines have had little impact in controlling unfair practices.

The regulatory framework would include provisions for strict action against unfair practices. The department is talking to the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the industry to ensure their cooperation before going ahead with statutory provisions that will include strict penal action against pharma companies violating the provisions.

Many entities in the industry flout the fair practice guideline to beat the competition. Unfair practices include promoting drugs and pharmaceutical products with false claims and misleading names, providing gifts and other incentives to doctors to generate more prescriptions, and sponsoring holidays and foreign tours for members of the medical fraternity under the guise of medical conferences.

"We are currently waiting for an amendment in the Medical Council of India's existing code of ethics that would clash with the proposed statutory provision, and the government will give six months' time to the industry after putting its formal guideline in place before making it a law, under which the violators can be penalised," said one of the two persons, who is a senior official in the department of pharmaceuticals, on condition of anonymity.

Copy to Mr. VKT,

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