

Online sale of antibiotics gives WHO worries

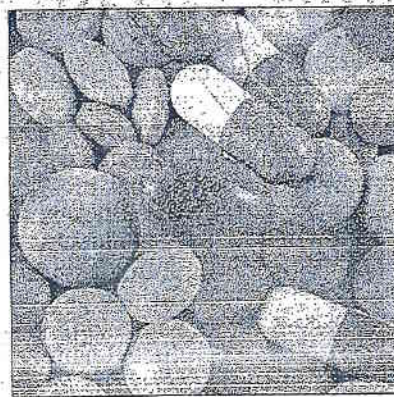
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As World Health Organisation (WHO) launched its new global campaign 'Antibiotics: Handle with care' during the first ever World Antibiotic Awareness Week — to be marked from November 16 to 22 — its multi-country survey has yet again raised concerns of online sale of antibiotics in India.

According to the survey report, 2% of the respondents said they got their antibiotics online. The report further revealed that three quarter respondents thought colds and flu can be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections, whereas colds and flu are caused by viruses and therefore are not treatable with antibiotics.

Dr Jayesh Lele, president elect of Indian Medical Association (Maharashtra), said: "IMA has objected on online sale of drugs. Sale of over the counter drugs is OK but medicines that needs doctor's prescription, should not be available



online. Misuse of schedule H drugs, antibiotics may go up if online sale of drugs is allowed."

IMA, too, has started a campaign on rationale use of antibiotics under which they are going to educate their own doctors. Around 3,500 chemists in the city will be shut on Wednesday as its associations have decided to go on nationwide strike against the online sale of medicines.

In October, the chemist associations had gone on strike to ensure the government should not regu-

Findings of the multi-country survey

More than three quarters (76%) of respondents report having taken antibiotics within the past six months.

90% of the respondents say they were prescribed or provided by a doctor or nurse.

Three quarters (75%) of respondents think that colds and flu can be treated with antibiotics; and only 58% know that they should stop taking

antibiotics only when they finish the course as directed.

75% agree that antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest problems in the world.

72% of respondents believe experts will solve the problem before it becomes too serious.

(1,023 online interviews)

larise the sale of medicines through e-pharmacies on the internet. All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) had submitted its memorandum to the central and state level health authorities.

"Online sale of medicines, especially antibiotics, poses an increased risk of adverse drug reactions/side effects and antibiotic resistance. In India, online sale is still in its nascent stage," said Prasad Danave, president of retail and dispensing chemist association.

Talking about why antibiotics should be rationally used, Dr Kishor Taori, the president of Maharashtra Medical Council, said: "The growing antibiotic resistance cases are one of the biggest health-care problems. Rise in antibiotic resistant tuberculosis is one example why we need to get serious. In western and Gulf countries there is an audit of even prescription. While in India, there is no audit of antibiotics happening, we at MMC are in process to make our doctors follow drug hygiene."

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