

Drug Control dept grapples with staff shortage

Only 49 inspectors to keep tabs on 28,000 pharmacies in State

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BANGALORE: Severe staff shortage in the Drug Control department has had a crippling effect on its administrative functions.

The department has not been able to conduct regular inspections of pharmacies across the State even as complaints about sale of spurious and substandard drugs have been piling up.

For a State that has more than 28,000 wholesale and retail pharmacies, there are just 49 drug inspectors who are required to perform numerous duties.

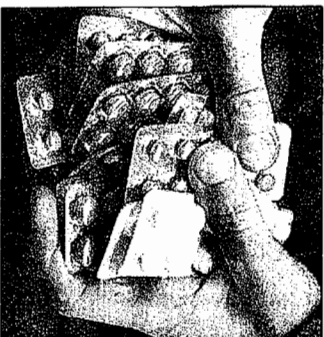
According to sources in the department, 38 per cent of the

vacancies in the Drug Control department have been left unfilled.

'Impossible task'

Ideally, every pharmacy in the State ought to be inspected once a year. According to officials, the fact that each drug inspector is expected to keep an eye on over 500 of them at any given point in time makes it almost impossible for them to perform the task. This is how erring pharmacies escape action and sell spurious drugs and violate other norms, because of lack of supervising personnel.

"Drug inspectors are expected to ensure that the Drugs and Cosmetics Act is being com-



plied with and they are also responsible for inspecting medicinal stores and warehouses. They must make sure that drugs not adhering to set standards are withdrawn and stopped from being supplied. They are also in charge of collecting drug samples and sending them to laboratories for

The numbers

■ In Bangalore, a City that has over 5,000 pharmacies, there are just nine Drug Inspectors.

■ Koppal District, which registers maximum number of complaints, has just one Assistant Drug Controller and one Drug Inspector for support.

analyses. They should also ensure appropriate action against offenders in case drugs are found to be substandard," an official from the department explained.

Follow-up of the legal procedures also comes under Drug inspectors' purview. They are in charge of instituting prosecution in courts. They must also look into complaints that are referred to them on a regular basis, he explained.

The department also battles the issue of acute shortage of computer operators who help feed data and keep track of the information. Ministerial assistants too are lesser in number compared with the actual need.

Even as 50 more posts have been sanctioned and 12 lie before the Karnataka Public Service Commission for approval, such changes will hardly make a difference, the official added.

DH News Service

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