

MANY PHARMACIES SELL BULK MEDICINES THAT MAY INCLUDE ADDICTIVE SYRUPS WITHOUT KEEPING RECORDS

Sans chemist, med store is a grocery

Team dna @dna

A chemist shop without a pharmacist is like a grocery shop, says Food and Drug Administration (FDA) chief Mahesh Zagade in an interview with reporters at the dna office. The state FDA commissioner decides to stay firm on the action against chemists and vouch not to give in to illegal demands.

What are the problems caused owing to absence of qualified pharmacists in the state?

Of the 51,000 chemists in Maharashtra, almost 34% shops have no pharmacists. The Indian law was formulated in 1954. No one has questioned the non-implementation of the law by the regulatory authority. In the US, 1 lakh people die annually on adverse drug treatment.

This is despite regulation that pharmacists are a must. In India, the estimated number of people losing lives or developing adverse reactions is much higher. It is shocking to note that only about five per cent chemists issue bills. FDA raids have brought to light that there are no records for a bulk of medicines sold. This may have included addictive cough syrups or other medicines that are strictly to be given with a valid prescription.

Have chemists shut shops due to unavailability of pharmacists?

Yes. Of 51,000 chemists, close to 3,000 have surrendered their licence and shut shop. The chemist associations have gone on strike three times and shut down shops since the FDA started cracking down on chemists operating without



The chemist associations have gone on strike three times and shut down their shops since FDA started cracking down on chemists... They have to understand that without a pharmacist, a chemist shop is reduced to a grocery shop and that they are playing with people's lives.

— Mahesh Zagade, FDA chief

every 16,000 people. Even if we get rid of half the chemist shops not functioning according to rules and have one shop per 5,000 people, for example, we, as a regulatory authority would have done a decent work.

What is the FDA doing to crack down on drugs manufactured by pharma companies that are contaminated and of faulty quality?

The FDA inspects 7000 drug samples from chemist shops, wholesale godowns, manufacturing plants of pharma companies in and outside Maharashtra that find their way into the state. Of which, seven per cent drugs are substandard. They are not spurious or counterfeit but manufactured by registered pharma brands. Due investigations are carried out in labs and FIRs are registered.

Control Organisation (NACO) guidelines?

Yes, we are. NACO has issued guidelines to limit blood donors in a camp to 500. If philanthropic organisations are conducting camps with donors spilling over the specified limit, we will issue notices and initiate action. You need to understand that blood has a limited shelf life and blind collection will lead to poor quality control and de-

pharmacists. They have to understand that without a pharmacist, a chemist shop is reduced to a grocery shop and that they are playing with people's lives. The presence of pharmacists in chemist shops is a must.

Is the FDA acting on people who organise blood donation camps where donors go beyond 500, in accordance with the National Aids Con-

struction or waste of many blood bags.

What is the extent of proliferation of chemist shops in Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai?

The density of chemist shops is intense in urban areas. There is one chemist shop for every 2,000 people in city areas. In countries where there are stricter regulations, like Malaysia, there is one shop for

Industry.

961