

Pharma cos opt for designer drugs for better brand recall

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PHARMA companies are experimenting with design to distinguish products from round and rectangular pills sold at drug stores. Designer drugs taking shape of a dumbbell, flower, lollipop or symbol X are believed to have a faster recall among customers who are more likely to remember the shape if not the name.

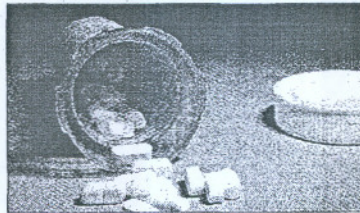
"Anything that is seen is perceived faster. Different shapes along with colors are recalled faster than a white round tablet," says Ketan Patel, managing director of Troikaa Pharma. The company's vice-president Rashesh Patel feels oral explanation about drugs has only 10% retention among doctors, but if there is a visual appeal, the retention of the message goes up by 60%.

The Ahmedabad-based ₹200-crore company won the country's first design patent suit for a D-shaped anti-pain tablet in 2008. Gujarat High Court upheld the company's patent for Dynapar rejecting claims by a few Northern Indian companies that launched a similar shaped and coloured drug with similar brand name.

Troikaa has brought in three designer variants of fever drug paracetamol to make a difference in the market that has hundreds of companies across the globe producing similar versions of the 117-year-old drug. The company's anacid drug looks like a flower, a cancer drug comes in the form of a lollipop and the pain-relieving diclofenac is D-shaped.

Abhishek Pandurangi, a Mumbai-based patent consultant from Closer2patents firm, says "Drug designs are not common and most of the pharma companies go for standard shapes."

WHATS IN A NAME



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There are a few examples globally, a box shaped drug with dual colour design registered with IP Australian (Australian patent office) by Reckitt Benckiser N.V. and a heart shaped design registered by Colgate-Palmolive with the same patent office.

The US patent has teddy-bear shaped drug registered in 1971 by Perrigo Company. Patel says, the sales of Troikaa's flower shaped antacid rose from 1,20,000 strips in September to 3,60,000 strips in November.

The three designer variants of paracetamol were launched last year under brand name XY-KAA. The variants have clocked ₹10 crore turnover and according to a market expert, very few brands touch ₹10 crore mark in one year. The company has 24 designed registered out of its 32 patented drug which are in the pipeline.

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