Online Pharmacies: What You Need to Know to Keep Everyone Safe

Speakers

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Objective

1. Identify verified online pharmacies from unverified sites.
2. Explain methods of patient counseling that promote use of safe online medication sources.
3. List trustworthy sources for patient education related to the risks of unverified online pharmacies.
Today’s Discussion Agenda

1. Framing the Issue: Illegal Online Pharmacies
2. Understanding Hoosier Perceptions and Behaviors Regarding Online Pharmacies
3. What Professionals Can Do to Keep Patients Safe
4. Concluding Remarks & Next Steps

About ASOP Global Foundation

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP) Global Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to educating consumers about the proliferation of illegal pharmacy websites and counterfeit medicines and how to stay safe online.

http://ASOPFoundation.pharmacy

► Affiliated non-profit 501(c)(4) organization: ASOP Global
www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy

Cost, Convenience and Access to Care

35,000 – 45,000 online pharmacies
Cost, Convenience and Access to Care

International Business Times

Why Is This A Problem?

Hidden Poisons in Counterfeit Medications

There are a lot of things that go into counterfeit medications that consumers can be exposed to by buying medicines from unregulated sellers on the internet.

Why Is This A Problem?

► Every day, approximately 20 new illegal online pharmacy websites go live globally.

► 3,300 sites sell controlled substances like opioids, often without a prescription.

► In searching online for prescription opioids across the three major search engines, nearly 91% of the first search results led users to an illegal online drug seller offering prescription opioids.

97% of online drug sellers operate illegally.

The Partnership for Safe Medicines, 2012; LegitScript 2016, NABP 2017
Why Is This A Problem?

- Common violations by illegal drug sellers include:
  - Selling falsified, adulterated and unapproved medicines;
  - Selling prescription medications without a prescription; and
  - Operating with no pharmacy license.

- Risks of over/under-dosing, drug interactions, adverse events and financial fraud.

- Online drug sellers can make between $1 – 2.5 million in sales each month.

- Counterfeiters make 10x more profit than that of illicit drug traders.

Rogue Internet Pharmacy Operations

Patient Harms
Policymakers are Increasingly Concerned

- January 25, 2018: Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Report
  - https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations/hearings/combatting-the-opioid-crisis-
    exploiting-vulnerabilities-in-international-mail
  - Illegal online drug sellers contribute to the opioid epidemic.
  - Drugs bought online are often transshipped through other countries (via national post) in an effort to reduce the risk of interdiction by law enforcement.
  - Estimated revenues from online illicit drug sales increased from between $15-17 million in 2012 to $150-$180 million in 2015.

- April 4, 2018: U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD called on Internet providers and social media platforms to take proactive measures to help address the illegal advertisement and sale of prescription drugs and illicit narcotics online.
  - https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Speeches/ucm603651.htm

- May 10, 2018: Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Report on Illicit Fentanyl Sources:

- Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018 (introduced Senate bill).
  - If passed, would:
    - Improve detection and seizure of illegal drugs, such as fentanyl, through stronger FDA and Customs and Border Protection coordination.
    - Clarify US Customs and Border Protection is responsible for destroying controlled substances found in packages at the border, and strengthen FDA’s authority to refuse admission of illegal drugs from bad actors.

Spotting a Fake Online Pharmacy

- Is the online pharmacy in compliance with the laws in both the country of origin and the country of destination?
  - Approved Medicines.
  - Licenses in Jurisdictions of Business
  - Does it require a valid prescription for prescription medications?
    - No ‘Form-Only’ Medical Consultations
    - No Waivers
    - Real Doctor-Patient Relationships

Fraudulent use of NABP VIPPS seal

Fake pop-up when seal is clicked to create appearance of legitimacy
What is NABP?

- The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.
- Nonprofit, international, impartial professional organization that supports its member boards of pharmacy in protecting the public health.
- Has been certifying US-based internet pharmacy sites since 1999.
- Acquired the "pharmacy" TLD in 2014 to create a safe online environment for internet pharmacy transactions, health products and health information.
- Public health protection – foundation for all NABP programs and services.

ASOP Global Hoosier Survey

Methodology and Demographics
- ASOP Global partnered with Baselice, a nationally-recognized polling firm, to conduct a consumer survey over five days in May 2017.
- Margin of error: (+/-) 4%.
- 33% online panel; 37% landline phone; 30% mobile phone.
- 500 interviews (48% male/52% female)
  - Age distribution, race/ethnicity and partisanship representative of Indiana voters.
  - Respondent ages reflect national averages.
- 78% of participants or a member of their household currently taking a prescription medication.

Key Consumer Behavior Findings

While only 27% of consumers are very familiar with online pharmacies, a majority (55%) has or would consider buying medication online.
Key Consumer Behavior Findings

► 1/3 of respondents had purchased from an online pharmacy for themselves or someone under their care.
► Adults over the age of 55 were most likely to have purchased from an online pharmacy.
► Lower household income correlates with willingness to accept higher risks of online pharmacy use.
► 72% of daily social media users would consider purchasing medications online compared to 75% of non-social media users who would not consider using an online pharmacy.

Key Consumer Behavior Findings

88% of people who have purchased prescription drugs online (purchasers) did not discuss it with their healthcare provider.

Of all respondents, 91% do not discuss where they get their medicines with from a provider.

What Medicines Would Consumers Purchase Online?

► 42% have bought or would consider buying chronic disease medicines online, such as products for blood pressure or high cholesterol.
► 21% have bought or would consider buying specialty medications online, such as chemotherapies or hormone replacement therapy.
► 17% of consumers have considered buying chronic pain medications online (we didn’t ask if they had bought in this category for fear of under self-reporting).

But less than 5% of consumers are aware of tools available to help them find safe online pharmacies.
Key Consumer Perception Findings

After learning the facts, 59% of consumers oppose prescription drug importation from Canada.

► 53% of consumers perceived Canadian online pharmacies as risky.
► 57% of consumers believe their privacy and/or identity theft is at risk.
► 15% of consumers would consider using a Canadian online pharmacy and are willing to accept moderate-to-high risk to do so.

Top Facts that Impact Consumer Perceptions

► Many foreign online pharmacies do not require prescriptions for medication, making it easier to evade law enforcement and get drugs, worsening our the US opioid epidemic.
► Since 2010 there have been more than 200 felony counts against networks affiliated with Canadian online pharmacies.
► While the Canadian government requires Canadian online pharmacies to sell Canadian approved drugs to their own citizen, they cannot ensure Americans will receive Canadian medicines. According to the US FDA, 85% of medicines that are sold to Americans by Canadian online pharmacies are not Canadian.

Top Three Survey Takeaways

► 55% of Hoosiers have or would buy online, yet less than 5% know how to do so safely.
► Educated consumers take less risks.
► More education is needed – to healthcare providers and consumers/employees.

For more survey takeaways, please visit: https://goo.gl/pTwvUJ
What Professionals Can Do to Counsel Patients

► Patients should recognize .Pharmacy as the valid designation for a legitimate pharmacy or related website.

► Message: “Look to the right of the dot”.

► Increased public awareness will decrease the impact of rogue online drug sellers masquerading as pharmacies.

► As consumer recognition increases, .Pharmacy will be the desired website domain for consumers & legitimate pharmacy businesses.

What To Remember

If Buying Online: How to Save Money and Stay Safe

► BuySafeRx.pharmacy to verify before buying online and for links to drug discount resources.

► RefillWise.pharmacy is a free-to-use drug discount savings card that offers users an average of 40% savings on prescriptions when presenting the card at their brick-and-mortar pharmacy.

► BlinkHealth.pharmacy negotiates with pharmacies to determine one low price for each medication; accepted at over 57,000 pharmacies nationwide.

► GoodRx.pharmacy collects and compares prices for every FDA-approved drug at over 70,000 pharmacies nationwide; offers 100% free service including coupons for many pharmacies.

► NeedyMeds.org steers people to assistance programs to help them afford their medications and other healthcare costs.

► Check out manufacturers’ websites for coupons to use in local pharmacies!

Final Takeaways

• Visit www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy to verify before buying medicine online.

• Provider toolkit available (or you can create a customized version using readily downloadable materials)

• Trust websites ending in the “.pharmacy” (dot-pharmacy) domain.

• For the latest news, sign-up for the ASOP Global Foundation newsletter on our website www.ASOPfoundation.pharmacy
Develop Your Own Toolkits to Educate

Go to the following website and download infographics, fact sheets, and brochures at no charge:
https://buysaferx.pharmacy/for-the-media/infographics/
https://buysaferx.pharmacy/for-the-media/fact-sheets/
https://buysaferx.pharmacy/asop-global-brochures/

Three Options to Make Your Own Toolkits

1. Download whatever you like from ASOP website at no charge and print documents yourself.
   - This option has ASOP branding noted on all education material.

2. If you wish to co-brand with ASOP, to include your organization name and/or logo, you will need to complete an ASOP licensing agreement which is offered at no charge. If interested, contact Matt Rubin at matthew.rubin@FaegreBD.com

3. If you wish to order toolkits from ASOP and pay for printing/mailing costs, contact Matt Rubin at matthew.rubin@FaegreBD.com

References


Thank You! Questions?

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