

Pharmaceutical service industry soon to have paid consultation from Medical Representatives - faces a humanitarian challenge

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Pharmaceutical Service Industry soon to have paid consultation from Medical Representatives – faces a humanitarian challenge

 Sandeep Narula |  May 05, 2021



The drastic virus attack in the world did pause our lives but led to unpredicted development in the health sector. COVID-19 with itself has brought changes in everyone's life. In recent years healthcare innovators have brought us artificial intelligence algorithms that can read chest X-rays or better than radiologists. It has brought us inexpensive genomic sequencing that can guide personalized cancer treatments leading to vast improvements in population in health management. The pandemic has placed disorganized demands on the modern healthcare system. As Pharma is finding out, today's technologies can create the efficiency and flexibility needed to navigate uncertainty where this transformation requires a shift in mind-set not just amongst the consumers but also those serving within the industry.

The Pharmaceutical sector is divided into two segments one where it is 'Acute' which involves the usage of Anti-virals and Anti-bacterials. The second is 'Chronic Segment' which includes, Hypertension, Diabetes, and Mental Health which have long-term implications. Till COVID-19, the 'Chronic Segment' was doing very well. The consultation guidelines given during the time of the COVID-19 in the Pharma segment have changed tremendously where Tele-medicine and Tele-consultation played an important role.

While most of us have read about the recent trends in the Pharmaceutical sector during the pandemic, not many have focused on the challenges, opportunities and innovations that the industry has thrown at the workforce including the doctors and the medical representatives.

Acceleration of Digitization:

While the pandemic has raised unparalleled demands, the industry especially the Pharma industry has shown a response that has demonstrated innovations to bring in the best possible services. However, the most important human resources who would utilize the services of the Pharma Industry are the Doctors and the Medical Representatives at the moment. Doctors and

medical representatives utilized digital platforms and calls to communicate with doctors during the pandemic. The most important question that arises is whether digitization will accelerate or will it go back to the old model of servicing by the medical representatives. The Pharma industry has bounced back post-COVID-19 and this is definitely a good sign. The business will always be broken down into two categories a) where the contact is required b) where the physical contact is not required.

Fieldwork an interface between Doctors and Pharmaceutical Professional:

The first thing which we need to understand is that the 'Field Work' is the interface between the doctor and Pharmaceutical professional, this is where the productivity is actually derived from. Post-COVID where the norms were strict and Doctors would barely see patients and the medical representatives is now returning to normal. Doctors who would earlier feel the need to consult the patient through phone, from a mobile application or through virtual consultation are now reducing the gap by meeting the patients and medical representatives in person. This has been possible as Doctors do believe that medical representatives who are in the field would have a better knowledge of the medicines that are manufactured and even prescribed to the patients ultimately. However, the post COVID-Syndrome has created multiple innovations which might be slightly challenging.

Pay per visit for Pharmaceutical Representatives / Doctors Consultation:

Doctors can be categorized as those a) Who would like to meet in person in spite of the Virus b) Those who would meet through Virtual platforms and would not involve through in-person discussion and c) Those who would never prefer to meet anyone during the Pandemic. This is where companies began to innovate for gaining profitability on their slacked services. While every service now looks at being paid, the services rendered by Pharmaceutical Representatives

which were earlier free of cost have now begun to change their beat. Pharmaceutical Industry has seen a sea change after COVID, where a consultation fee is being charged for receiving a consultation from a Pharmaceutical Representative.

For Example: Fortis Hospital Mohali enforced and issued a circular for the medical representatives. In case the medical representatives wished to meet the doctors they would have to deposit a fee at the counter for every visit. This raised numerous questions in the medical representatives' fraternity. There is a possibility that if this persists and is also implemented or accepted then there are a good number of chances that it might percolate in the other institutions as well.

Digitization Challenges for Doctors:

First, the IT infrastructure in India is not advanced as much as in other countries. The second challenge is medical representatives from companies are now focused on offering paid consultation. The case cannot be rested here since the data offered by these representatives might be chargeable and not free. The question that arises is, 'Why would a Doctor invest in a 25 MB file from a single representative?' If the doctor wants to meet 20 different representatives then it will be a big challenge to suffice to invest in such a huge amount. The second level of challenge is that all doctors are not digitally literate especially those in the rural areas and those in the outskirts. Hence, it is necessary to contemplate if such issues can be resolved by Medical Representatives, Pharma Companies and Doctors.

COVID-19 has pushed the whole ecosystem five years ahead of time. What seemed impossible yesterday is now an innovative theory applied across. While the industry might see tremendous shifts these shifts must be in the favour of the workforce which has been the backbone of industry especially the Doctors and Medical Representatives. The Government and the industry must work towards a collaborative way of implementing practices, innovations and mandates that are feasible for both the doctors and the medical representatives on the whole.



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