



Online Pharmacies and Prescription Drug Abuse

Office of National Drug Control Policy

2007

Overview

Prescription drug abuse has increased significantly over the last several years. Contributing to this challenge, rogue online pharmacies provide controlled substances with few of the controls built into the system of brick and mortar distribution. The Administration seeks to ensure easy access to medications for patients with legitimate need and valid prescriptions, while limiting illegal diversion.

Suggested Criteria for Dispensing Prescription Drugs

Valid prescription and face-to-face medical evaluation:

- A prescription would be valid when issued for a legitimate medical purpose following at least one in-person medical evaluation of the patient by the medical practitioner.
- There are certain limited instances in which medical practitioners may be exempt from conducting an in-person medical evaluation and may opt for utilizing Internet technology telemedicine.
- The telemedicine exceptions include:
 - 1) A patient located in a DEA-registered hospital or clinic by a DEA-registered practitioner in the same state.
 - 2) A practitioner that has obtained a special registration from the U.S. Attorney General.
 - 3) Certain Veterans Affairs practitioners, with the approval given by the U.S. Attorney General.
 - 4) A Veterans Affairs practitioner treating a patient in an "emergency medical situation."
 - 5) Certain Indian Health practitioners with the approval of the Secretary of Health and Human Services.
 - 6) A national health emergency declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Information requirement on Web sites: Online pharmacies should be required to post truthful information about their location, identity; and licensure of the pharmacy, pharmacists and prescribers, and States in which they are authorized to practice pharmacy. Online pharmacies should also be required to register with DEA to dispense controlled substances via the Internet.

Prohibition on advertising illegal sales: The Administration supports criminalizing the use of the Internet to advertise the illegal sale of a controlled substance. In addition, the Administration supports increased penalties for the unlawful importation of schedule III-V controlled substances to correspond with schedules I - II penalties.

Enhanced penalties for Schedule III through V: The Administration supports increasing penalties for unlawfully dispensing controlled substances in Schedules III through V. These enhanced penalties would apply equally to all unlawful distributors and dispensers of controlled substances (not just those who do so by means of the Internet). +

