

Expectations from pharma industry post-Covid-19

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COVID-19, in its wake, has brought umpteen disruptions across the globe and India is no exception to this, especially pharma industries facing restrictions on exports of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and formulations with a view to ensure that same are made available to meet domestic requirements which include several antibiotics, hormones and vitamins, in anticipation of shortage.

While restrictions imposed is a commendable initiative by the government with riders, let us see what pharma will be looking out post-Covid-19 once same gets eased out.

The finished dosage formulations of the affected APIs that are meant for export, are, as of now, manufactured and packed as per the specifications, standards, labelling and so on, need to be exported at breakneck speed once restrictions are lifted as same products cannot be diverted to the Indian market and thus, avert loss of foreign exchange.

The next challenge to come over is logistics – to ensure supply chain is put in place to pre-Covid level, which will take toll of time to come back to normalcy when freight rates get evened out and movement of inputs reach desired levels. Added to this are manpower constraints – chemists and support workforce – as work from home is out of question for pharma industries due to nature of operations. Besides, many have gone to their home towns and returning will depend on their passing through containment zones en route.

Hence to maintain continual trade and commerce in pharma products, industries may resort to slew of measures – to start with, may operate at 30%, enhance to 60% and ultimately 100% at planned intervals with interplay of finance, supply chain and human capital on a progressive note. Besides, all protocols of WHO before starting the operations like social distancing, screening & monitoring, disinfection/sanitation, containment plan/measures and prevention/awareness in the entire gamut of operations including supply



chain, visitors screening, logistics and contractors have to be put in place.

The preparedness and execution of Covid containment measures by government are appreciably managed especially with strict lockdown, Covid isolation facilities, social distancing, ban on travel by air and surface and so on, which have positive results.

Pharma, in the light of Covid-19 attack, will now resort to e-factory set-up conforming to Industry 4.0, increased robotisation of production operations with less of human intervention, including transfer/movement of in-factory in-put through autonomous transport, packaging, logistics and put every activity in e-mode including hygiene and avoid human touch, while at the same time meeting the increased domestic and export requirements qualitatively and quantitatively. This will take care of the pharma industry in case similar virus invades humans potentially. All these operations will be controlled and executed by push of keys from board of computers through artificial intelligence and networking with giant screens in the backdrop of entire control room. It will also ensure that skill of existing workforce is upgraded to meet 4.0 standards to ensure continuity of employment.

For this, pharma will solicit for liberal funding from government to robotise the existing set-up and save millions of lives globally in the event of similar calamity and carve a niche for India in the global pharma market.

We will have to wait, watch and see how fast Covid-19 fades into oblivion.

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