

shortages. BREXIT obliged wholesalers to outsource medications from other countries other than the UK. Certain medications are short in supply due to the lengthy process involved in engaging alternative suppliers willing to deliver to Malta. In justified health needs, medications with foreign labels are accepted by wholesalers. Having to add English labelling adds up to the cost of the medication, which is the third main challenge faced by procurement officers in Malta. Patients are also impacted since higher priced products are put on the market.

Solutions offered include actively searching for alternative suppliers, making and maintaining relationships with procurement officers worldwide and having at least a 6-month buffer stock for the projected consumption.

Conclusions: Results highlight the need of long-term mitigation strategies, in view that even when a replacement is available, patients do not always accept an alternative. Challenges must be overcome. Developing guidelines and a clear-cut crisis management plan is a way forward.

Internet pharmacies serving the international community

Abanoub Samir Gamil, Anthony Serracino Inglott¹

¹Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Introduction: The rise of internet pharmacies has significantly transformed the pharmaceutical industry, offering convenient access to medications while presenting challenges in regulation, safety, and quality control. Although online pharmacies enhance affordability, accessibility, and privacy, they also contribute to public health risks, including counterfeit medicines, lack of pharmacist intervention, and unauthorized sales of prescription drugs. Regulatory frameworks for internet pharmacies vary globally, creating inconsistencies in patient safety measures and enforcement. Understanding the benefits, risks, and regulatory gaps is crucial to ensuring the safe and effective use of internet pharmacies worldwide. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of internet pharmacies on healthcare, focusing on consumer accessibility, regulatory challenges, and risks of counterfeit medications. The research identifies differences in national regulatory approaches and assesses the effectiveness of existing frameworks in safeguarding public health.

Method: A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA protocol, analyzing studies from HyDi, PubMed, and Medline. The research focused on eight countries (Germany, Hungary, Jordan, Malta, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America) to provide a global perspective. Studies were selected based on their relevance to internet pharmacy

accessibility, regulatory frameworks, and public health risks. Key areas of analysis included medication affordability, counterfeit drug prevalence, pharmacist oversight, and illegal online pharmacy operations.

Results: The initial search identified 198 studies, of which 36 met the inclusion criteria after screening and full-text analysis. Findings indicate significant differences in public perception and regulatory enforcement across countries. Internet pharmacies are widely accepted in Saudi Arabia and the UK, whereas traditional pharmacies remain dominant in Hungary, Malta, and Jordan. Additionally, 43% of US-based and 95% of UK-based online pharmacies were found to be operating illegally. Consumers cited cost savings, convenience, and privacy as major reasons for purchasing medications online. Key risks included exposure to counterfeit drugs, incorrect labeling, absence of pharmacist consultation, and the sale of restricted medications without prescriptions. Regulatory approaches varied widely: A voluntary logo scheme enhances consumer trust and safety (United Kingdom); a Pharmacy Seal enforces strict national regulations (Germany); Developing a regulatory framework to control online medicine sales (Jordan); Only brick-and-mortar pharmacies can legally sell medications online (Hungary); Online medicine purchases are limited to personal use (Malta); Only licensed pharmacies can operate online under government supervision (United Arab Emirates); Electronic prescriptions are mandatory under strict regulations (Saudi Arabia); Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites accreditation ensures compliance with federal and state laws (United States of America).

Conclusion: The absence of global regulatory consistency increases the potential for illegal drug sales and counterfeit medicines. Stronger international collaborations, improved pharmacist involvement, and stricter online verification processes are necessary to mitigate these risks. Governments and healthcare professionals must work together to enhance regulatory oversight, educate consumers, and implement advanced safety measures.

Pharmaceutical policies and social participation in health: The role of official health conferences in Brazil

Vinícius André Boff¹, Fernanda Manzini¹, Silvana Nair Leite¹

¹The Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil

Introduction: Social participation plays a pivotal role in the development of public health policies in Brazil. Health Conferences serve as key moments of public consultation and social mobilization, occurring every four years and progressing from local to municipal, state, and national levels, where the discussions address the current health context and its connection to the Unified Health System (SUS). These