

The Review on Pharmaceuticals Products Distribution

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ABSTRACT:

This review article on pharmaceutical product distribution in pharmaceutical companies plays a pivotal role in ensuring the seamless supply of medications to various healthcare providers. It involves a complex and highly regulated process that demands strict adherence to guidelines to maintain product integrity, comply with regulations, and meet the demands of the market. Efficiency in supply chain management is essential, encompassing everything from procurement to transportation. Temperature control is critical, and compliance with regulatory standards ensures the safety and efficacy of pharmaceutical products. Establishing a wide network for distribution is necessary to reach diverse geographical locations, including pharmacies, hospitals, and healthcare providers. Maintaining timely and accurate deliveries is crucial to support ongoing patient care. Inventory management is a key aspect, requiring careful attention to prevent stockouts or overstock situations. Integration of advanced technologies, such as track-and-trace systems and data analytics, enhances transparency, traceability, and overall efficiency. A robust risk mitigation strategy is necessary to handle unforeseen challenges such as product recalls or disruptions in the supply chain. Many pharmaceutical companies collaborate with third-party logistics (3PL) providers to optimize their distribution capabilities and focus on their core competencies.

I. INTRODUCTION:

As an MSR your role and responsibility will include going to various people in hospitals, pharmacies and wholesalers in order to sell your product and also to ensure the availability of your product across various location. Thus in such a case it becomes important for you as an upcoming MSR to understand the role of various stakeholders in pharmacy distribution. This knowledge will help you in approaching the correct person in case of particular need and will also give an idea to the stakeholders' responsibilities and need. Let us understand the distribution channel in detail.

II. PHARMACEUTICAL DISTRIBUTION:

Indian pharmaceutical industry is on a strong growth path with the total value of Indian Pharma industry expected to reach almost \$50 Billion by 2015-2016. Out of this close to 22 billion is expected to originate from the domestic formulation business. A key issue faced by the industry is management of the supply chain. Supply chain in India is highly fragmented with more than 550,000 retail pharmacies in the country.[17] Though the number of distributors have increased by 4 fold in the last three decades, from 125,000 in 1978, the volume of prescriptions distributed have not increased proportionally. Hence it is evident that though there is a growth in the number of distributors and retail pharmacies, distribution is not very efficient. Also the rural markets remain highly untapped. Drug distribution in India has witnessed a paradigm shift. Before 1990, pharmaceutical companies established their own depots and warehouses. Now they have been replaced by clearing and forwarding agents (CFAs). Following are the major players in the distribution of pharmaceutical products.

2.1. CFAs: These organisations are primarily responsible for maintaining storage (stock) of the company's products and forwarding SKUs to the stockist on request. Most companies keep 1-3 CFAs in each Indian state. On an average, a company may work with a total of 25-35 CFAs. The CFAs are paid by the company yearly, once or twice, on a basis of the percentage of total turnover of products. Large drug manufacturers will have CFAs in almost every state in India. CFAs majorly help manufacturers in providing reach for its products. They majorly facilitate in by passing the state sales tax (CST-4%). CFA's are just created to avoid local state taxes (they hardly take 1 or 2% margin). Mostly CFAs serve a single company. CFAs follow a stock transfer model from the manufacturer and all invoices sent to the stockists are on the name of the manufacturer itself. Based on the demand for their

products they decide on how many stockists to maintain in each district and further in talukas.[22]

2.2. Cost of the distribution: Distribution from manufacturing plant till the stockist is borne by the manufacturer. Price to Stockist (PTS), Price to Retailers (PTR) is the terms used in the industry.

2.3. Sub stockists: would get the stock from stockists and operate on 8% commission till they establish themselves as a big player and qualify for getting a stockist license from manufacturers, Retailers get 15 – 20% margins based on type of drugs, generic/branded/price controlled and even more on counterfeit drugs.

2.4. Logistics providers: The transfer stock on per kilo basis, Rs.5 per kilo etc. Logistics are managed through cost effective means, local players who quotes lowest price. There are suppliers who quote surprisingly low prices and operate by sending a person in public transport to deliver the products.

2.5. Stockist: The distributor who can simultaneously handle more than one company (usually, 5-15 depending on the city area), and may go up to even 30-50 different manufacturers. They pay for the products directly in the name of the pharmaceutical company after 30 to 45 days.

2.6. Retail pharmacy: The retail pharmacy obtains products from the stockist or substockist through whom it finally reaches the consumers (patients). The MSR plays a major role here as he is the one who goes to various retail pharmacies and takes orders from them. Based on the orders generated the MSR regulates the delivery of the order from wholesaler or stockist point.

2.7. Liasening: Liasening agents do institutional sales directly from the manufacturer.

2.8. Liaison Agent: The Liaison Agent is responsible for ensuring communication and cooperation between two or more entities by serving as an official between top-ranking officials of two or more organisations. Liaison officers also have a supervisory responsibility for their particular organisation, usually giving them authority to order the changes necessary to ensure the two organisations complete a given task. It majorly liaisons with a Pharmaceutical organisation and undertake few of its functions. For example identifying Key Opinion leaders and maintaining relationship with them.[14]

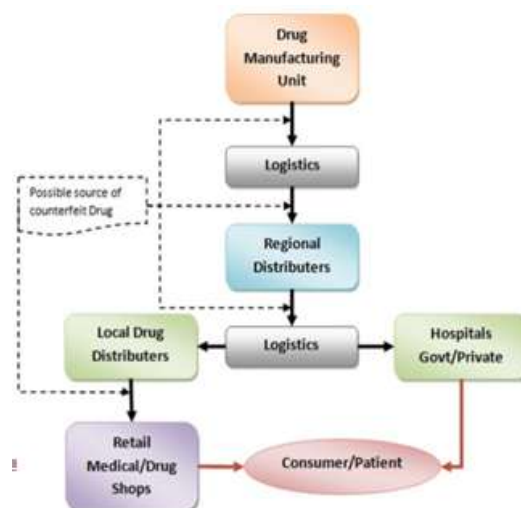


Figure :A :Manufacturing Units.

III. PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS:

There are majorly two type of procurement system.

1. Central and State Government Procurement
2. Private Procurement

According to the procurement type the process of procurement will differ and the personnel attached to the procurement process will also differ. So as an MSR you must learn about both the procurement process in order to identify key decision making personnel for the sales. Let us study both in detail.[24]

A]Central and State Government Procurement:

- Central and state government procures drugs for government hospitals, dispensaries, defence, etc.
- The procurement by government is generally done through inviting in tenders from various drug manufacturers. Mostly these tenders are rewarded basis on price.
- The Medical Store organisation is responsible for procurement of medicals drugs and instruments for the central governments, dispensaries, etc.
- It also distributes drugs supplied by international organisations like WHO, UNICEF, etc
- State governments like of Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Delhi, Orissa, etc also have centralized drug procurement systems.

B]Private Procurement:

- Large private hospitals majorly buy medicines in bulk thus getting discounts on bulk purchases. Thus drugs are generally provided to

them through the CFAs to avoid stockist and retailer margins,

- Smaller hospitals generally procure through wholesaler/stockist.

IV. ASSOCIATION OF DRUGGISTS AND STOCKISTS IN INDIA:

All India Organisation of Chemists & Druggists (AIOCD) has over 5.5 Lac members from retail chemists and pharma distributors/stockists. Stockist plays a very powerful role in the pharma distribution in India. Companies cannot bypass stockists and sell directly to institutions or retail chains. They may face a ban from the stockists and considering the substitutes available for each molecule, companies cannot take the risk of losing the sales. The objectives of AIOCD are:

- To provide Safety, Security and Prosperity to the members.
- To provide platform for broadening their knowledge of Trade and to resolve common, mutual problems by collective endeavor.
- To bridge the gap between Industry & Trade by arranging company wise stockiest meetings, exchange their view points and arrive at mutual understanding, sign memorandum of understanding to eliminate hurdles in our day-to-day activities.
- To collect, publish, distribute and make available to the members vital information related to the trade.
- To encourage members for collective and co-operative activities and give them an opportunity for participation so that they can express their views on important matters.
- To establish links with other similar bodies and likeminded associations and interactions with them and maintain harmonious relationship for common benefits.
- To represent at various forums try to mitigate any such issues of Govt., Semi-Govt., Industry and /or any bodies who tries and implements law or norms which may be harmful or adversely affecting our trade.
- To have interactions with Food & Drug Administration and implement good trading practices by complying with Drug Act and Rules and to draw their attention on such laws/rules which may not be appropriate in present context and request them for its modifications.
- To create harmonious relationship amongst members and also to create confidence

amongst each other this is very important for maintaining unity.

- To guide and prepare members to face the challenges arising out of great changes taking place in pharmaceutical Trade due to the impact of GATT, TRIPS, EMR, Mergers & Acquisitions, Co-Marketing etc.
- To collect sufficient funds and arrange for regular income to meet the day to day expenses and other activities of our organisation.
- To arrange lectures, seminars other educational programmes which are of use and in the interest of our members.

V. REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:

There are numerous regional drug and stockist associations for chemists, dealers and stockists. They play a major role in regulating the activities of activities of the dealers and chemist on a regional level.[9] They also play an important role in settling disputes and establishing the operating regulations like margins, processes, etc at a regional level. As an MSR you must be aware of the regional associations and their regulations (if any) in order to facilitate your interaction and working with the pharmaceutical distribution channel. Following are a few regional associations:

- ❖ All Delhi Chemists Association
- ❖ Central Delhi Chemists Association
- ❖ Chemists & Druggists' Association, Chandigarh
- ❖ Chemists & Druggists' Association, Goa
- ❖ Chemists & Druggists' Association, West Bengal

VI. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPLIES:

Institutional supplies are 7% of the total drug sales in India. Distribution for institutions (divided into state funded, central funded & large hospitals) happens either through stockist or directly from the company CFA. Companies bid for the tenders passed by these institutions like major PSUs (Public Sector Units) including NTPC, BHEL etc.

VII. STRUCTURE IN PHARMACEUTICAL ORGANISATION:

Following some key points:

7.1. Hierarchical Structure:

Pharmaceutical companies often adopt a hierarchical structure with clearly defined levels of authority. This structure allows for a top-down flow of decision-making and ensures a clear chain of

command. Departments are typically organized based on functions such as research and development, manufacturing, marketing, and sales.[25][1]

7.2.Functional Departments:

Within the hierarchical framework, pharmaceutical organizations are often divided into functional departments. These may include Research and Development (R&D), Regulatory Affairs, Quality Control, Manufacturing, Marketing, Sales, and Administration. Each department focuses on specific aspects of the drug development and commercialization process.

7.3.Matrix Structure:

Some pharmaceutical companies employ a matrix structure, especially those engaged in complex research and development projects. This structure combines both functional and project-based organizational designs. Teams from different functional areas collaborate on specific projects, allowing for a more flexible and dynamic approach.

7.4.Research and Development Focus:

Given the nature of the industry, pharmaceutical organizations heavily emphasize the Research and Development department. This department is often central in the organizational structure, reflecting the critical role of innovation in drug discovery and development.[24][9][1]

7.5.Regulatory Compliance Units:

Regulatory compliance is paramount in the pharmaceutical industry. Organizations have dedicated units or departments responsible for ensuring that products meet strict regulatory standards set by health authorities. These units work closely with R&D to navigate complex regulatory landscapes.

7.6.Global Presence and Regional Divisions:

Large pharmaceutical companies with a global reach often organize their structure based on geographic regions. Regional divisions handle local regulatory requirements, marketing strategies, and

distribution channels, adapting to diverse market needs.[14]

7.7.Cross-Functional Teams:

To foster collaboration and innovation, pharmaceutical organizations frequently form cross-functional teams. These teams bring together individuals from different departments to work on specific projects, promoting knowledge-sharing and a holistic approach.

7.8.Adaptability and Innovation:

Organizational structures in the pharmaceutical industry need to be adaptable to rapid changes in technology, regulations, and market dynamics. Innovation units or centers are often integrated to facilitate continuous adaptation to emerging trends.

VIII. FACTORS DECIDING THE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE IN A TYPICAL PHARMA COMPANY:[SELF]

An organisation uses the given two dimensions to lay apt processes and maintain the organisational structure:

8.1.Structuring of Activities:

- Specialization of activities: Define the role and responsibility at each stage for each person.
- Standardization of processes: All the processes should have a set format to be followed applying same for everyone.
- Formalization of Document: Every employee must know the documentation needed at each process and must document the same at right time, right place.

8.2.Concentration of power:

- Centralization of authority: The chain of command must be known to all.
- Configuration of role structure.

INDIAN pharmaceutical Industry wide organisation structure mostly follows – CHANDLER TIME-LINE

Time	T+1.....T+2
Product Diversification strategy	Low----->
Structure	Simple, Functional, Divisional

T→ Simple Structure, Centralized, Single Product Line.

T+1→ Moderate Centralization, Moderate Formalization, Moderate Complexity.

T+2 High Complexity, Low Centralization, Moderate Formalization.

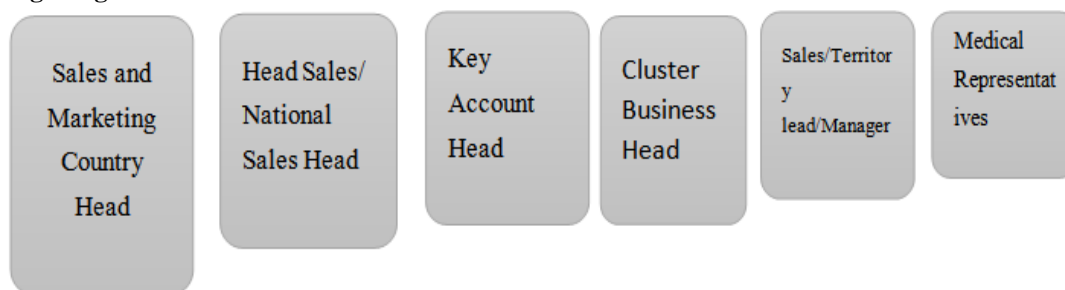
This diagram shows how an organisation grows with time. At the time of inception of an organisation start with simple hierarchy, centralized decision making and fewer product line. This is

called Simple Structure With time organisations grow and move to become Functional and finally Divisional in structure.[25]

IX. SALES ORGANISATION STRUCTURE:

Now that you have seen what is the organisational structure in a pharma company, let us learn about the hierarchy in the sales department.

9.1. Large Organisation:



A large organization in the pharmacy sector operates as a multifaceted entity encompassing various aspects of the healthcare industry. It typically includes pharmaceutical manufacturing, distribution, and retail segments. In manufacturing, the organization develops and produces a diverse range of medications, adhering to rigorous quality and regulatory standards. The distribution arm manages the supply chain, ensuring timely delivery to pharmacies, hospitals, and healthcare providers.[9][2] The retail aspect involves a network of pharmacies or drugstores where customers can access prescribed medications, over-the-counter drugs, and healthcare products. These outlets serve as points of interaction between healthcare professionals and patients, offering advice and support. Additionally, large pharmacy organizations often invest in research and development to innovate new drugs and therapies.[4] In response to the evolving healthcare landscape, such organizations may also integrate technology, implementing electronic health records (EHRs) and digital platforms for prescription management. Regulatory compliance, pharmacovigilance, and adherence to ethical practices are paramount in their operations.[4] Collaboration with healthcare

providers, insurance companies, and pharmaceutical manufacturers is common, facilitating a comprehensive approach to patient care. Overall, a large pharmacy organization plays a pivotal role in the healthcare ecosystem by ensuring the accessibility, safety, and efficacy of pharmaceutical products while contributing to advancements in medical research and patient outcomes.[11]

A) Benefits of Large Organisations:

Resources: One of the biggest differences between these two environments is the amount of resources available. And not just money, but availability of up-to-date equipment and expert consultants. Large companies have very deep pockets, and money is committed to provide scientists with the best and most up to date technologies to perform their work. There are also a wide variety of experts in various fields that you have access to if you need niche expertise.[14]

Best Practices: Big companies have a deep corporate history, and have put into place best practices on getting things done; from approving projects to filing patents to performance management. These best practices take more time but there is someone there making sure that the decisions that are made are sound.[21]

9.2. Medium Organisation:



Medium-sized organization in the pharmacy sector operates within a dynamic healthcare landscape, bridging the gap between pharmaceutical manufacturing and local patient care. This organization typically engages in pharmaceutical distribution and retail activities, serving as an essential link in the healthcare supply chain. [2] In the manufacturing sphere, a medium pharmacy organization may focus on producing a specific range of medications, adhering to quality standards and regulatory requirements. This could involve the production of generic drugs or the manufacturing of specialized pharmaceuticals. The organization may also engage in research and development initiatives, working on improving existing formulations or developing new drugs to meet emerging healthcare needs. [5] The distribution arm of the organization manages the logistics and supply chain, ensuring efficient and timely delivery of pharmaceutical products to pharmacies, hospitals, and healthcare providers. This involves inventory management, order fulfillment, and compliance with regulatory guidelines governing the transportation and storage of medications. [7] On the retail front, a medium pharmacy organization typically operates a network of pharmacies or drugstores. These outlets serve as key touchpoints for patients, offering a wide range of medications, over-the-counter drugs, and healthcare

products. Pharmacists and healthcare professionals in these outlets play a vital role in patient care, providing information, counseling, and support on medication usage, potential side effects, and general health and wellness advice. [9] Embracing technology is essential for a medium pharmacy organization to enhance operational efficiency and improve patient services. This may include implementing electronic health records (EHRs), pharmacy management systems, and online platforms for prescription refills and health consultations. [4] Collaboration with local healthcare providers, community organizations, and insurance companies is crucial for ensuring comprehensive patient care. By forging strong relationships within the healthcare ecosystem, a medium pharmacy organization can contribute to better healthcare outcomes for the community it serves. [10]

B) Benefits of Medium Organisations:

- A medium sized organisation has access to reasonable resources compared to a small organisation.
- The decision making is much faster than a large organisation.
- The opportunity to grow is far higher than in a small organisation but less as compared to a large organisation.

9.3. Small Organisation:



A small organization in the pharmaceutical industry plays a critical role in local healthcare by focusing on specific niches or segments within the broader pharmaceutical landscape. While smaller in scale compared to industry giants, these organizations often exhibit agility and specialization, catering to the unique needs of their communities.[25] In the pharmaceutical manufacturing realm, a small organization may specialize in producing a particular category of medications, such as generic drugs or formulations addressing specific therapeutic areas. This specialization allows for a more targeted approach, potentially leading to greater expertise and efficiency in the production process. Research and development efforts may be concentrated on refining existing formulations or developing locally relevant medications.[23] Distribution in a small pharmaceutical organization involves managing a more localized supply chain. These organizations often work closely with regional pharmacies, clinics, and healthcare providers to ensure a timely and reliable flow of pharmaceutical products. Despite their smaller scale, these organizations prioritize adherence to quality standards and regulatory compliance in the distribution process.[12] On the retail front, a small pharmacy organization typically operates a limited number of community-based pharmacies. These outlets are integral parts of the neighborhoods they serve, offering personalized services and building close relationships with local residents. Pharmacists in these settings often go beyond dispensing medications, providing valuable advice on health and wellness.[1] Technology adoption is vital for small pharmacy organizations to enhance

operational efficiency and improve customer experiences. While they may not have the resources of larger counterparts, embracing digital platforms for prescription management, inventory tracking, and customer interactions helps streamline processes and stay competitive.[5] Collaboration within the local healthcare ecosystem is a key strength for small pharmaceutical organizations. By working closely with community health clinics, physicians, and other healthcare providers, they contribute to the overall well-being of the population they serve. Partnerships with local organizations and initiatives support public health initiatives and strengthen communities.[2] In summary, small organizations in the pharmaceutical industry fill crucial roles by specializing in specific niches, providing localized services, and fostering community connections. Despite their size, these organizations contribute significantly to the accessibility and quality of pharmaceutical products within their respective communities.[9]

C) Benefits of Small Organisations:

Impact: At a small company, the work that you do is immediately incorporated into the next regulatory filing or investor presentation, and you feel that how well you do your job directly contributes to the success of the business.[26]

Pace: Small companies are typically fast to act, and can quickly make decisions and take the next step. This is mostly due to the senior management being down the hall from the laboratory, and understanding the advantages of being small and nimble. Overall, forward progress can happen much more quickly at small companies.[26]

Large Organisations vs. Small and Medium Enterprises

When looking for a job, a good fit is very important. You want to be able to get as much out of a job as possible, as well as feel like you are making an impact on the direction of the company. What your own wants and needs are will be dictated by your personality. However, what you can expect from a company is mostly (not always) dictated by whether it is a large, well funded company, or a medium company. Therefore let us discuss the pros and cons of Large and SME so that you can choose an organisation which fits your personality type.

X. DISTRIBUTION BEFORE KNOW THE MARKET RESEARCH:

MSR's spend most of their time on the road, talking with pharmacists and hospital personnel and doctors to promote their company's products and the volume of their sales. Apart from basic selling skills, like how to ask questions and how to do presentations – Reps must learn every aspect of the product they will be selling, from the underlying anatomy and physiology to competitor products! In addition to their sales duties, many MSRs conduct field research on behalf of their employers. They may be responsible for monitoring physicians' prescription patterns or gauging reactions to a new treatment. As the pharmaceutical industry advances rapidly, there are always new products to research. Reps play a role in communicating advances at the forefront of medicine to stakeholders and bringing new and sometimes life-saving treatments to the public.

Market research in the pharmaceutical field is a crucial process that involves the systematic gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data related to the pharmaceutical market. This practice is vital for pharmaceutical companies to make informed decisions, understand industry trends, and respond to the dynamic healthcare landscape.

Pharmaceutical market research encompasses several key aspects:

Product Development: Research helps identify unmet medical needs, assess market demand, and understand potential competitors, guiding the development of new drugs or therapeutic solutions.

Competitor Analysis: Understanding competitors' products, market share, pricing strategies, and marketing approaches allows pharmaceutical companies to position their products effectively and identify areas for differentiation.

Regulatory Environment: Staying abreast of regulatory changes and compliance requirements is essential for pharmaceutical companies to navigate legal frameworks, ensuring that their products meet safety and efficacy standards.

Consumer Behavior: Researching patient and healthcare provider preferences, needs, and behaviors helps companies tailor marketing strategies, improve patient adherence, and enhance overall healthcare outcomes.

Market Segmentation: Identifying and targeting specific patient populations or demographics aids in developing personalized approaches, optimizing

resource allocation, and tailoring marketing messages.

Global Trends: Understanding global healthcare trends, such as the rise of personalized medicine or advancements in biotechnology, helps companies align their strategies with broader industry developments.

XI. MAINTAINING TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE:

11.1. Need for Gathering Information:

It's the information age, which means the more information you're armed with, the better off you'll be. So before approaching prospective companies to sell your product, be sure you gather relevant information to handle and execute the sales. This means gathering as much information as possible on your sales territory. You should also compile data on similar and competing products information on what's out there, what's selling and who's producing it, for example. Once you gather information, convert it into knowledge (technical knowledge) by filtering it according to your purpose and use it for cold calling or directly approaching the customer.

11.2. Resources of Information:

There are different ways to gather information when it comes to your targeted Health Care Professional. Some of the resources are listed below:

- Database from online resources like hospital's website, information portals etc.
- Information got from company meetings, technical data presentations and briefings.
- References got from doctor himself/herself.
- Information provided by chemists.
- Database shared by path labs, hospitals, clinics.
- Latest clinical database supplied by the company which can be converted to hot deals.
- Attending educational workshops; reviewing publications and promotional inputs.

11.3. Kind of Information:

You may wonder how someone convinces a doctor in just short period of time of 5-10 minutes. There are medical representatives who have the ability to convince any doctor in just 5-10 minutes and doctors start to prescribe their medicines. It takes a lot of home work before visiting a doctor to become one. For a good and error free presentation, you are required to gather information about three things mainly:

- About your Company
- About your Product
- About your Competitors

11.4. Gather Information about your Company

- First gather all the detailed information about your company.
- Extract 6 achievement of your company like:
- Any award given to your company
- Approved with ISL Certificate
- Number of offices in country
- Total number of workers
- Total number of departments
- Total number of products in market

11.5. Gather Detailed Information about Your Product:

For a good presentation, gather detailed as well as necessary information of your product. For example if you are talking to a doctor about glucose then collect all information related to glucose first because doctor may ask you about glucose.

XII. PHYSICIAN REQUIREMENT AND THEIR PRACTISING ENVIRONMENT:

As an MSR you must understand the working environment of a physician as until and unless you understand the working condition and requirements of the physician you will not be able to meet his needs and convince him about your product. Also the knowledge of different working environments will help you understand the various process you need to go through in order to convince your clients, who are the influencers and decision makers are, how to create a buy in and finally close the sale. Therefore let's learn more about the working environment and requirement of a physician. Mostly the general doctors or physicians practice in clinics, offices or large hospitals, whereas some others work in laboratories, as well. One of the major factors that influence the job environment for general doctors to a greater extent is the place where general doctor is working. For example he working environment for general doctors would be bit relaxed in case he or she runs his or her own clinic or practices from home.

Because in such cases he would have the liberty of setting his own schedule and decide to attend to only a many patients as he can for the hours he wishes to work. In other case when a general doctor is working at some big hospital, he might be required to maintain a much faster pace,

thus the working environment for general doctors can become stressful in these types of scenarios. Thus as an MSR you will have to plan your presentations and interaction according to the schedule and setup of the doctor or by anticipating the time he will give you for interaction. For example if it is his own clinic you may get more time to explain, whereas in a hospital setup you may have only a few minutes or you may have to address a group of doctors together. [25] In large setups like hospitals, it may also happen that you never directly interact with the physician working there instead you interact with the purchasing department and convince them. Thus in a large setup convincing a group becomes important. [17] Another very important factor will be the area of medicine the doctor is related to like he can be paediatric general physician, ob/gyns, etc. This will help you target the right group of physicians, healthcare institutions related to your product. [17]

XIII. PHARMACIST REQUIREMENTS AND THEIR PRACTICING ENVIRONMENT:

Pharmacists distribute drugs prescribed by physicians and other health practitioners and provide information to patients about medications and their use. They advise physicians and other health practitioners on the selection, dosages, interactions, and side effects of medications. Pharmacists also monitor the health and progress of patients in response to drug therapy to ensure the safe and effective use of medication. Pharmacists in community and retail pharmacies counsel patients and answer questions about prescription drugs, including questions regarding possible side effects or interactions among various drugs. They provide information about over-the-counter drugs and make recommendations after talking with the patient. Thus a pharmacist is in a position to influence customers and create a push for your products. In order to do this you as an MSR must identify what influences a pharmacist; understand his needs and working environment. [25][9][1] One of the major factors affecting the decision making of a pharmacist is the setup in which he is working. As a pharmacist you may work out of a retail pharmacy, hospital pharmacy or online pharmacy. In case of hospital pharmacy the concern will be more towards acquiring generic drugs or low cost drugs. Also, since they buy products in bulk they expect special bulk buying discounts whereas in a

retail setup the pharmacist may be more concerned with his or her margins on your product or special schemes to push your product. In retail setup the location of the pharmacy also becomes very important as one pharmacy may be located near to large no. of healthcare institutions. In such case where the foot falls and sales volume are high MSR must take special care to maintain the relationship with the pharmacies as they are beneficial for sales volume. [22]

XIV. PRESCRIPTION AUDIT AND RCPA:

Pharma business is like an ocean rich with variety of fish. When one wants to catch whales he has to go to the right area and the right depth. Likewise in pharma business when one wants to go for larger accounts, he has to first identify them and then deploy all resources and efforts. This process of identifying the right prescribers and evaluating their potential is in simple words Retail Chemist Prescription Audit – RCPA. RCPA is designed to measure outflow of prescription drugs from the retail chemist into the hands of the patients. Prescription audit data is the most sensitive indicator of prescription products performance in the market place. [8] Prescription is not an expression of opinion, attitude or speculation by the prescriber but a matter of fact. It is the record that the prescriber tends to change his mind about individual drug or line of treatment. Prescription records changes from time to time, indicative of the demand pattern. [7]

Advantages of Prescription Audit:

1. Prescription audit helps to get precise product wise prescription information which helps to make short and pointed product presentation with competition oriented cutting edge.
2. Prescription audit improves productivity and efficiency of MSR and gives better success rate.
3. Prescription audit helps to identify the right target customers from total doctor population.
4. Prescription audit helps to strengthen customer relationship management – CRM.

XV. IT SKILLS TO CAPTURE INFORMATION:

IT skills will help you not only collate but also analyze the data collect in a much accurate and speedy way. Therefore as an MSR you must be well aware of the IT tools that you can use to capture and analyze information from various

sources. [25][22][21][12][9] Following are the few IT skills that you may use in order to capture information:

MS Excel: It is a very good tool to collate the data received from various sources. Excel will help you create accurate analysis tables from where comprehending the findings becomes easier and thus helps lead to more effective and faster decision making.

Online Databases: Internet opens an altogether new array of information for someone, there are many databases, sites, articles, etc. from where inputs can be taken both in terms of our own product and competitors' products. Thus as an MSR you must be at ease to use the internet and access the various databases and reviews present.

Social Listening: Various pharma companies are using social media in a large way today therefore interactions and news feeds on various social platforms provide a lot of information related to consumer preferences, marketing strategies, product features, etc. to gain knowledge related to competitors' strategies one can closely follow the social media interactions done by competitor brands and plan course of action accordingly. Also, social media helps you gauge the reaction towards your own product from the various customer feedback received. Thus social media proves to be an ideal platform to gain information.

WhatsApp: The WhatsApp application is used in major way to communicate within the team and outside too. It is an easy, fast and cost free method to stay in touch with your teammates and clients.

XVI. CONCLUSION:

A Distribution process within a pharmaceutical company is a complex and intricately managed journey that pharmaceutical products undertake from their initial manufacturing stages to reaching the end-users, typically pharmacies, hospitals, and healthcare providers. This process is vital to ensuring the availability and accessibility of medications, as well as maintaining the integrity and safety of pharmaceutical products. [25] At the outset, pharmaceutical products are meticulously manufactured by pharmaceutical companies, adhering to stringent quality and safety standards. Once the manufacturing process is complete, the products undergo packaging and labeling, readying them for distribution. The packaged pharmaceuticals are then stored in distribution centers, often strategically located to facilitate efficient transportation and accessibility

for wholesalers, distributors, and other stakeholders.[2]Wholesalers and distributors play a pivotal role in the distribution process by procuring pharmaceutical products in bulk from manufacturers or regional distribution centers.They act as intermediaries, connecting manufacturers with pharmacies and healthcare providers.Inventory management becomes paramount at this stage, as wholesalers and distributors use advanced systems to track stock levels, manage expiration dates, and ensure the accuracy of their product offerings.[1]Pharmacies, hospitals, and healthcare providers, in turn, place orders with wholesalers or distributors based on their inventory needs.The fulfillment of these orders involves a careful orchestration of transportation logistics.Products are transported from distribution centers to wholesalers and then to the end-users.Special attention is often given to the transportation of pharmaceuticals, with temperature-controlled environments maintained to preserve the efficacy and safety of certain medications.[19]Upon receiving the pharmaceutical products, pharmacies conduct quality checks to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the received items.Inventory management at the pharmacy level is a critical aspect, often facilitated by computerized systems that monitor stock levels, track expiration dates, and facilitate the seamless processing of prescriptions.[4]Pharmacists then play a vital role in dispensing medications to patients based on prescriptions provided by healthcare professionals.Patient counseling is a common practice, where pharmacists provide valuable information on proper medication usage, potential side effects, and address any queries or concerns the patients may have.[7]Throughout the entire distribution process, regulatory compliance remains a central focus.The pharmaceutical industry is subject to strict regulations to guarantee the safety, efficacy, and quality of pharmaceutical products.Compliance with Good Distribution Practice (GDP) guidelines and other regulatory requirements is imperative to ensure that the distribution chain operates within the bounds of established standards.Technology integration is another noteworthy aspect of the distribution process.Electronic systems, such as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and other digital tools, are employed to streamline order processing, shipment tracking, and overall logistics management.[8]

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