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### Need to create a robust regulatory framework for OTC medicines: KG Ananthakrishnan

Yash Ved, Mumbai  
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There is a need to create a robust regulatory framework for over the counter (OTC) medicines that will enable and facilitate the creation of a positive list of OTC medicines and ensure their large-scale availability, stated KG Ananthakrishnan, director-general, Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI).

This framework should also work towards educating consumers and pharmacists on the judicious use of OTC medicines and the creation of a system of checks and balances regarding the safety, efficacy, promotion, and consumption of such medicines.

Ananthakrishnan said that with patients getting more and more involved in their health decisions, OTC medicines not only save valuable resources for healthcare systems but also save time for patients.

OTC medicines have played an important role in expanding access to safe and effective treatments while advancing consumer health as they empower patients to treat or manage many health conditions conveniently and successfully.

In the United States, 86% adults believe that responsible use of OTC medicines helps lower individual healthcare expenditure. For every dollar spent on OTC medicines, the US healthcare system saved more than 7 dollars.

Similarly, in European countries, 8 out of 10 individuals recognise that it is their responsibility to manage their own health and are willing to do so.

In order to effectively ensure expanded access to health solutions, a set of robust OTC guidelines,

aligned with the WHO's objectives of educating people about self-medication, is crucial.

“With the increasing number of people self-medicating, there is a high probability of patients resorting to irresponsible self-medication which can cause delay in diagnosis of ailments and adverse effects because of drug interactions. The answer to non-responsible self-care is not to clamp down on self-medication but to enable consumers to be more responsible. This can only be possible through a robust legislation which addresses all aspects of self-medication including consumer education and the rigorous implementation of these regulations,” added Ananthakrishnan.

Furthermore, Ananthakrishnan also said that the Indian healthcare ecosystem can thus benefit immensely from improved OTC system in the country.

Established in 1965, OPPI represents the research-based pharmaceutical companies in India. OPPI believes the need for innovation must be balanced with the necessity for more accessible medicines, within a robust IP environment. OPPI remains committed to supporting the nation's healthcare objectives and collaborating with all stakeholders to find sustainable solutions.