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# Pharma cos, doctors embrace digital transformation to reconnect with each other virtually during pandemic

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Pharmaceutical companies and doctors are today embracing the digital transformation and are aggressively taking steps to adapt to the changes to reconnect with each other virtually during the pandemic.

The doctor's practice around diagnosing patients and prescribing pharmaceutical brands has also undergone a sea change because of the implementation of telemedicine guidelines. The pharmaceutical industry is also now swiftly ramping up its digital capabilities to engage with the medical fraternity.

Talking about digital transformation during the pandemic, Namita Thapar, Executive Director, Emcure Pharmaceuticals says, "There has also been also a shift in the mindset of doctors who have now experienced the scale and reach that digital offer. Earlier, most conferences and events would rarely have been able to host more than 1,000 attendees. With digital, we are seeing events with over 10,000 attendees participating, some even joining from outside the country. In order to address the shift towards digitization, we trained our sales representatives to continue to engage with doctors in creative and unique ways using virtual tools."

"Fortunately, Emcure already enjoys a differentiated mind space with doctors, and our existing digital foundation helped in this disruptive transition," Namita remarks.

Talking about the journey towards going digital, she adds that to further amplify Emcure's engagement with the doctor community, we created a platform wherein younger doctors were able to showcase their recent case studies and get advice from stalwart doctors.

"We also initiated the EmGurukul program, which assigned an experienced doctor as a mentor to a younger doctor. Similarly, under our Emvidya program, we are continuing to train the nursing and paramedics staff across the country. Lastly, we also launched an online talk show series on YouTube called 'Uncondition Yourself', to engage with the doctors and patients and raise awareness around critical conditions. The show features

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“Hence, in our opinion, while in-person experiences will continue to be important, we expect to see more hybrid engagement in the post pandemic world. A one-size-fits all approach will not do, and the industry will have to learn to adapt to the transforming landscape and varying stakeholder requirements,” Namita concludes

According to Ahmedabad based pharmaceutical consultant Dr Sanjay Agrawal, “On the flip side, doctors who had specified time and practice on visiting patients face to face have been largely impacted. The medical representatives are today following the practice of leaving the product samples to the receptionist or its attendant, where clear communication on why and how to use the product is missing. To treat a person or prescribe drugs, there is more reliance on mediators or internet calls. Small video films through whatsapp cannot replace personal meetings of the sales staff to the doctors that are highly missing these days.”

During the pandemic, situation has turned out to be largely uncertain. Doctors are constrained to internet visits because offline services have shown to be largely ineffective. The digital dependency has become prevalent in the pharmaceutical industry and medical fraternity, which is not acceptable to all. Doctors who hardly use social media for commercialization have to concentrate on digital posts and short films for their brand promotion.

Talking about addressing the current challenge, Dr. Sandeep Arora, Head, Medical Affairs and Patient Services, Takeda India says, “At Takeda, employee safety is our utmost priority. With India now opening and Covid-19 cases dropping to levels reported in March 2021, the country is beginning to move towards normalcy. Takeda has been monitoring the situation closely and has resorted to a working model which is supported by data and analysis.”

“We have kept a close watch on not just the situation in our official headquarters in Gurugram and Mumbai, along with our key function areas basis the active covid cases and percentage of population vaccinated. We have recently allowed our field team to conduct face to face meetings with doctors and healthcare professionals (HCPs) in states that have been marked safe. With Covid- 19 safety at core, mutual respect with our HCPs and customers based on local regulations and our internal Covid-19 governance forms the basis of face to face interactions including conducting scientific events. There are strict Covid-19 protocols of social distancing, wearing a mask and sanitizing that are being adhered to those in the field. We continue to watch the situation closely and revise our strategy to our field teams basis the current situation every week.”

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