

Bar codes on way to check drug health

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Centre Also Working On Integrated Med Database

To ensure medicines sold in the country are genuine products, the health ministry has developed a 'Track and Trace' mechanism that will enable consumers to check safety and authenticity of a drug on the internet.

Under the system, the primary , secondary and tertiary packs of medicines will carry a unique bar code, which will be allotted to each manufacturer. Consumers, buying medicines from the retail pharmacy store, can use the bar code on the pack on internet to check information about the source of manufacturing of the product, whether it is an approved drug, its date of expiry as well as price fixed by the government etc.

The move is significant because of the highly fragmented Indian pharmaceutical market, pegged at around Rs 89,000 crore annually . The huge size of the market makes it difficult for regulators and monitoring agencies to track medicines, mainly in rural areas and distant villages. This leads to a potential risk of spurious, inefficacious and low quality medicines being sold in the market.

While the government is yet to finalize a date for launching the 'Track and Trace' system in the local market, Union health minister J P Nadda said companies will be given a reasonable time for transition to the new packaging system.

He added that compliance will be mandatory for all drug manufacturers. Now, the government is also working to create an integrated database with all details of a product, which will enable tracking and monitoring of these products.