

AiMeD welcomes Govt's move to introduce 'Ethical Marketing Code'

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The Government's move to put in place a separate, strict and mandatory 'Ethical Marketing Code' for medical device companies has been welcomed by the Association of Indian Medical Device Manufacturers (AiMeD).

AiMed has stated that the proposed 'Code' will help curb many unethical practices currently being practiced by deep pocketed players to the detriment of Indian patients and Indian medical device manufacturers.

The proposed code, at the discussion stage currently, seeks to put a total curb on many malpractices/ inducements such as foreign trips in garb of sponsoring for purportedly attending conferences for enhanced Training or expensive gifts being offered by some medical device companies to medical practitioners, their families and hospitals to influence prescriptions and orders in their favour. The pay-off in lieu of 'orders' not only distorts the market by vitiating fair competition but also hikes up the price of devices, ultimately to be paid by patients, common Indian citizens.

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"We whole-heartedly advocate and support a strict and distinct 'Ethical Marketing Code' with penal provisions for medical device industry as it will help curb many unethical marketing practices being indulged in by powerful deep-pocketed players at the detriment of common Indian citizens and Indian medical device manufacturers," said Mr Rajiv Nath, Forum Coordinator, AiMeD.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Govt of India - the nodal department for pharma and medical device industry - already has a 'Voluntary Code' for the Pharma Sector which is now being upgraded to 'Mandatory Code' or 'Strict Compliance Code' with punitive provisions. Till date this code was also applicable to medical device sector but like pharma sector, it also had little deterrence as it was a code without teeth. The Department is contemplating similar strict Code for medical device industry too. Currently, the Department is in the process of soliciting views of various stakeholders to draw a separate and exclusive code for medical device sector.

Under the proposed code, no freebies, no extravagant hospitality, no pecuniary benefits under garb of Training etc. are to be offered to hospitals or healthcare professionals.

Additionally to plug the legal loophole to protect consumers its prescribed every medical device's unit pack of sale to carry the MRP so that there are no excuses that the device is not an OTC (Over the Counter) product and hospital supply and hence not a consumer product .A media report about violations of the proposed code will be treated suo moto as a complaint against violator.