



PHARMACEUTICALS EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

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News / Story reproduced with thanks:- **Pharmabiz**

DCGI issues notices to 3 cos for reviving ads on emergency contraceptive pills

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Direct link to the News/Story:-

<http://www.pharmabiz.com/article/detnews.asp?articleid=56274§ionid=>

The drug controller general of India (DCGI) has issued show-cause notices to three major pharma companies--- Mankind Pharma, Piramal Healthcare and Morepan Laboratories----for launching advertisements on emergency contraceptive pills even after the Union Health Ministry's suspension of advertisements on these products till a final decision is taken on the issue by the DTAB.

According to sources, the DCGI office has asked these companies to explain why action, including the cancellation of licences for these products issued by the DCGI office, should not be taken against them for launching advertisements on morning-after-pills like 'Unwanted 72', 'Option-72' and 'I-Pill'. While the Unwanted-72 is a product of Mankind Pharma Ltd, 'Option-72' is promoted by New Delhi-based Morepan Laboratories. I-Pill was actually promoted by Cipla Ltd, but in March this year Piramal Healthcare had acquired I-Pill brand for Rs 95 crore from Cipla.

Due to public outcry, the Health Ministry had suspended the advertisement of these pills late last year and had referred the issue to the DTAB for taking a final decision. Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) is the highest authority on technical matters under the Union Health Ministry and has health experts as members. Pending a final decision by the DTAB, the health ministry had suspended advertisements on these products in the country.

Even though the DTAB is yet to deliver its final decision, the pharma companies have revived the advertisements on these products, in gross violation of the government order.

The reappearance of similar advertisements once again raised concern among the experts and public interest groups in the country. There are apprehensions that the advertisements of these pills being carried by the pharma companies are promoting the misuse of the pill by the young generation who have started looking at the pills as a regular contraceptive method as the advertisements are said to have failed to drive home the message clearly that these pills are emergency contraceptives.

Ever since the advertisements began appearing on the electronic media early last year across the country, both the civil society organisations and gynaecologists in the country have been expressing concern on the misuse of the pill by the young generation. It triggered a debate in sexually conservative India with critics arguing that the easy availability of such pills would encourage promiscuity among the millions of young people. There was also criticism that the easy availability of these drugs will also promote unsafe sex among younger generation and may result in promotion of diseases like HIV/AIDS in the country.