

Virtual Mentor

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IN THE LITERATURE

Internet Sales of Prescription Drugs

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Marcwick C. Several groups attempting regulation of Internet Rx. *JAMA*. 1999;281(11):975-976.

As the number of Web sites that prescribe drugs proliferate, reports of abuse and deception have also become more commonplace. Many online pharmacies prescribe "lifestyle" drugs, such as Viagra, Propecia, and Zyban. Online sales of Viagra are reported to have been made to deceased individuals, pregnant women, and even pet animals. (1) Many pharmaceutical Web sites are located overseas, further complicating efforts to regulate prescription sales and ensure product quality. Members of the health care community are concerned that consumers are obtaining drugs without prescriptions from authorized medical personnel, increasing the potential of misuse and harm to the user. Also, the quality of many products originating outside the United States are not regulated by the [Food and Drug Administration](#).

Questions for Discussion

1. Given the potential harm to users of unlimited access to unregulated prescription drugs, do you think there should be some form of online prescription regulation?
2. If so, who should regulate these transactions?
3. What challenges does the Internet pose to the traditional patient-physician relationship?

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