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B.Pharm 8th Semester

BP803ET

PHARMA MARKETING MANAGEMENT

(Theory) — 45 Hours

UNIT — III PROMOTION IN PHARMA MARKETING

As per PCI / AKTU Syllabus

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UNIT — III PROMOTION IN PHARMA MARKETING (10 Hours)

UNIT III SYLLABUS — TOPICS COVERED

1. Promotion — Definition, Objectives & Methods of Promotion
2. Determinants of Promotional Mix
3. Promotional Budget — Methods & Allocation
4. Personal Selling (Medical Representative Detailing)
5. Advertising in Pharmaceutical Marketing
6. Direct Mail Promotion
7. Medical Journals as Promotional Tool
8. Drug Sampling Programs
9. Retailing in Pharmaceutical Promotion
10. Medical Exhibitions & Conferences
11. Public Relations in Pharma
12. Online Promotional Techniques for OTC Products

PROMOTION — Definition, Objectives & Methods

Definition of Promotion

Promotion is the element of the marketing mix that involves communicating with customers and other stakeholders to inform, persuade, and remind them about the company's products and services. It represents all the activities the company undertakes to communicate its product's merits and persuade target customers to buy it.

In Pharmaceutical Marketing: Promotion encompasses all the activities undertaken by a pharmaceutical company to communicate the therapeutic benefits, safety, and clinical evidence of its products to physicians, pharmacists, and patients to stimulate product usage and prescribing.

Objectives of Pharmaceutical Promotion

- **Inform:** Educate physicians about the product's mechanism of action, indications, dosage, and clinical evidence — especially during product launch.
- **Persuade:** Convince physicians to try and regularly prescribe the product over competitor drugs — during growth phase.
- **Remind:** Maintain physician recall and prevent brand switching — during maturity phase ('Keep the brand top of mind').
- **Differentiate:** Communicate unique selling propositions (USPs) over competitor drugs in the same therapeutic class.

- **Build Brand Equity:** Establish long-term trust and brand loyalty among prescribers and patients.
- **Support Distribution:** Stimulate demand at retail level — 'pull' products through distribution channel.
- **Counter Competition:** Defend market share against competitive launches and generic erosion.
- **Patient Education:** Improve drug compliance, disease management awareness (especially for OTC products).

Methods of Pharmaceutical Promotion (Promotional Mix Elements)

The pharmaceutical promotional mix consists of the following major tools:


Promotional Tool	Target Audience	Pharma Example
Personal Selling (Detailing)	Physicians, pharmacists	MR visiting doctor and detailing the visual aid
Advertising	Patients (OTC), physicians (Rx)	TV ad for OTC antacid; journal ad for prescription drug
Direct Mail / Email	Physicians, specialists	Product mailer with clinical reprint sent to cardiologists
Medical Journals	Physicians, specialists	Half-page ad for Atorvastatin in Journal of Cardiology
Drug Sampling	Physicians (to pass to patients)	Free sample strip of new antibiotic given by MR
Retailing / Trade Promotion	Pharmacists, chemists	Buy 10 get 2 free scheme for retail pharmacist
Medical Exhibitions / CME	Physicians, healthcare professionals	Company stall at APICON (Physicians) or hospital CME
Public Relations	General public, media, government	CSR health camps, press releases, patient support programs
Online / Digital Promotion	OTC consumers, physicians	Social media, SEO, WhatsApp, doctor portals (OTC products)

DETERMINANTS OF PROMOTIONAL MIX

The promotional mix refers to the specific combination of promotional tools that a pharmaceutical company uses to achieve its communication objectives. The right mix depends on several key factors:

Nature of the Product (Rx vs. OTC)

- Prescription (Rx) drugs: Direct-to-consumer advertising is restricted in India. Promotion targets physicians through personal selling, medical journals, CME, and sampling. The primary promotional tool is the Medical Representative (MR).
- OTC drugs: Mass media advertising (TV, radio, print, digital) is permitted. Promotion targets both consumers and pharmacists. Examples: Crocin, Eno, Volini ads on television.

 **Point:** In India, Schedule H and Schedule H1 drugs cannot be advertised to the general public under Rule 106 of the Drugs & Cosmetics Rules, 1945. Only non-prescription drugs can be advertised to consumers.

Stage in the Product Life Cycle (PLC)

PLC Stage	Primary Promotional Focus	Tools Emphasised
Introduction	Build physician awareness; educate on new therapy	Personal selling (MR detailing), CME, KOL programs, sampling
Growth	Build brand preference and expand prescriber base	Detailing, journal advertising, CME, direct mail
Maturity	Maintain loyalty, combat generics, remind	Detailing, trade promotions, patient adherence programs
Decline	Harvest — minimal investment	Reduce MR calls, retain loyal prescribers only

Type of Buying Decision

- Complex, high-involvement purchases (specialist drugs) → require personal selling, detailed scientific communication, clinical data presentations.
- Routine/habitual purchases (OTC products) → mass advertising and point-of-sale promotions are sufficient.

Target Audience

- **Physicians:** Personal selling (MR visits), CME, medical journals, product monographs.
- **Pharmacists:** Trade promotions, training programs, retailer meetings, bonus schemes.
- **Patients (OTC):** Television, radio, print, digital/social media advertising, in-store displays.
- **Hospitals/Institutions:** Key account management, formulary listing presentations, tenders.

Promotional Budget Available

- Larger budget allows multi-tool integrated campaigns — detailing + CME + journal ads + digital.

- Smaller/limited budgets force prioritisation — MR detailing remains the first priority in Rx pharma.

Push vs. Pull Strategy

Strategy	Definition	Pharmaceutical Application	Tools Used
Push Strategy	Promoting the product through the channel intermediaries to reach the end user	Influencing stockists, distributors, and pharmacists to stock and recommend the drug	Trade discounts, stockist schemes, pharmacist incentive programs
Pull Strategy	Creating demand directly among end users (patients/physicians) to pull the product through the channel	Building physician prescribing demand so pharmacists are compelled to stock the drug	MR detailing, CME, patient awareness campaigns, OTC advertising

Other Determinants

- **Competitor's Promotional Activity:** Reactive spending when competitors increase detailing frequency or advertising.
- **Geographic Coverage:** National brands need wider MR coverage and media; regional brands use focused local tools.
- **Regulatory Environment:** UCPMP guidelines, Drug & Magic Remedies Act, and Rule 106 of D&C Rules restrict certain promotional activities.
- **Market Maturity:** Mature markets require reminder/loyalty tools; new markets need awareness-building.
- **Company Resources & Goals:** Market leader vs. challenger — different promotional intensities and mixes.

PROMOTIONAL BUDGET

Definition

The promotional budget is the total financial allocation made by a pharmaceutical company for all its promotional activities over a defined period (usually one financial year). Setting the right budget is critical — too low means insufficient market reach; too high wastes resources.

Methods of Setting Promotional Budget

- **A. Percentage of Sales Method:** Budget is set as a fixed percentage of past or projected sales revenue. Simple to calculate and relates spending to financial performance. Example: If annual sales = ₹100 crore and the company allocates 15%, the promotional budget = ₹15 crore.
 - Advantages: Simple, financially stable, self-regulating.
 - Disadvantages: Ignores market opportunities; reduces budget exactly when more promotion may be needed (declining sales).
- **B. Competitive Parity Method:** Budget is set to match competitors' promotional spending — maintaining share of voice (SOV) in the market. Example: If a competitor spends ₹20 crore on detailing, the company matches it to avoid losing ground.
 - Advantages: Prevents competitive disadvantage; industry benchmarked.
 - Disadvantages: Assumes competitor's objectives are the same; may not reflect own company goals.
- **C. Objective and Task Method (Best Method):** Budget is derived by defining specific promotional objectives, identifying the tasks required to achieve them, and estimating the cost. Example: Objective — achieve 20% prescription share in the antihypertensive segment in 12 months. Tasks — deploy 200 MRs, conduct 50 CMEs, publish 10 journal ads. Estimated cost = total budget.
 - Advantages: Directly tied to marketing goals; most logical and scientific.
 - Disadvantages: Difficult to establish the precise task-objective relationship; time-consuming.
- **D. Affordable Method (What-We-Can-Afford):** Budget is whatever remains after covering all production, distribution, and operational costs. Common among small pharma companies.
 - Advantages: Financially safe — no over-spending.
 - Disadvantages: Ignores market needs; promotional spending determined by finances, not strategy.
- **E. Return on Investment (ROI) Method:** Budget is set based on expected incremental revenue or prescription growth from promotional investment. Scientific but requires accurate market response data.
 - Formula: $\text{Promotional ROI} = (\text{Incremental Revenue} - \text{Promotional Cost}) / \text{Promotional Cost} \times 100$

Allocation of Promotional Budget — Pharmaceutical Industry

Once the total budget is set, it is allocated across different promotional tools:

Promotional Tool	Typical Budget Share (Rx Pharma)	Remarks
MR Salaries, Incentives & Field Expenses	50–60%	Largest component; MR force is primary promotional vehicle
CME Programs & Medical Conferences	10–15%	Doctor meetings, symposia, sponsorships
Drug Sampling	8–12%	High-cost tool; used selectively for new launches
Medical Journal Advertising	5–8%	Scientific credibility; targeted specialist reach
Direct Mail / E-communication	3–5%	Product mailers, clinical reprints, emailers to doctors
Patient Support & Education Programs	3–5%	Adherence programs, disease awareness
Digital & Online Promotion	5–10%	Rapidly growing; doctor portals, webinars, social media
Medical Exhibitions / Trade Events	2–4%	APICON, API, pharmacist meetings, trade shows

Point: Pharmaceutical companies in India are required to disclose promotional expenditure as a percentage of sales in their annual reports. Leading companies like Sun Pharma and Cipla spend 12–18% of net sales on promotion.

PERSONAL SELLING — Medical Representative (MR) Detailing

Definition

Personal selling is a face-to-face, interactive communication between the company's sales representative and the prospective customer (physician/pharmacist) with the purpose of making a sale, building a relationship, and gathering market intelligence. In pharmaceutical marketing, it is called 'detailing.'

Importance of Personal Selling in Pharma

- Most important and widely used promotional tool for prescription (Rx) pharmaceutical products.
- Enables two-way, personalised communication tailored to each physician's needs and interests.

- Allows handling of physician objections immediately and effectively.
- Builds long-term doctor-company relationships through regular interactions.
- Direct source of market intelligence about competitors and physician attitudes.
- The only compliant way to promote Schedule H drugs directly to prescribers.

The Medical Representative (MR)

The Medical Representative (also called Drug Representative, Detail Man, or Pharma Sales Representative) is the frontline field force executive who visits physicians, pharmacists, and hospitals to promote the company's products.

Aspect	Details
Qualification	B.Pharm / D.Pharm / B.Sc (Life Sciences); MBA in Marketing preferred for senior roles
Reporting To	Area Business Manager (ABM) / Area Sales Manager (ASM)
Territory Coverage	Assigned geographical territory — typically 80–120 doctors per MR
Call Frequency	High-prescribing (A-class) doctors visited 2–4 times/month; B-class 1–2 times; C-class monthly
Daily Calls	Average 8–12 doctor calls per day (field day)
Tools Carried	Visual aid (detailing folder), samples, product literature, clinical reprints, giveaways
KPIs Measured	Number of calls, prescription audits (Rx), sales data, CME programs organised

The Detailing Process (Personal Selling Steps)

- **Step 1 — Pre-Call Planning:** MR reviews doctor's prescribing profile, identifies products to promote, prepares key messages and objection responses.
- **Step 2 — Opening the Call:** Builds rapport; opens with patient case scenario or clinical question relevant to the doctor's practice.
- **Step 3 — Product Detailing (Presentation):** Uses visual aid to present product features, clinical evidence, dosage, and differentiation from competitors. AIDA model: Attention → Interest → Desire → Action.
- **Step 4 — Handling Objections:** Responds to physician concerns about safety, cost, or efficacy with clinical data and published evidence.


- **Step 5 — Closing the Call:** Seeks commitment from physician to prescribe — e.g., 'Doctor, could you try this for your next 5 hypertensive patients?'
- **Step 6 — Post-Call Analysis:** Records call details in CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system; plans follow-up actions.

Visual Aid — The MR's Primary Tool

- A professionally designed, flip-book style folder used during physician detailing.
- Contains: Product name, positioning statement, key clinical data, mechanism of action, dosage regimen, safety profile, comparative charts.
- Designed by the Product Manager; approved by Medical/Regulatory Affairs.
- Digital Visual Aid (DVA/eVA) — tablet/iPad-based presentations replacing printed visual aids.

Doctor Classification (ABC Analysis)

Category	Description	Visit Frequency	Strategy
A-Class (High Value)	Top 20% doctors generating 80% of prescriptions (Pareto Principle)	3–4 times/month	Heavy investment; personal engagement; CME sponsorship; KOL development
B-Class (Medium Value)	Middle prescribers with growth potential	1–2 times/month	Regular detailing; educational support; moderate investment
C-Class (Low Value)	Low prescribers; new doctors; potential future growth	Once a month or less	Maintain presence; basic detailing; monitor for reclassification

 **Point:** The UCPMP (Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices) prohibits MRs from offering gifts, cash, hospitality, or entertainment to physicians. Only educational materials of nominal value are permitted.

ADVERTISING IN PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETING

Definition

Advertising is any paid, non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor through mass media channels. In pharma, advertising strategy differs fundamentally between Rx and OTC products.

Regulatory Framework for Pharma Advertising in India

- Rule 106, Drugs & Cosmetics Rules, 1945: Prohibits advertisement of any drug for treatment of diseases listed in the schedule (which includes major diseases — cancer, tuberculosis, HIV, etc.) except to medical practitioners.
- The Drug & Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954: Prohibits misleading advertisements claiming magical cures for diseases.
- Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) Code: Self-regulatory code ensuring truthful, non-misleading advertising.
- UCPMP (Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices): Governs pharmaceutical promotion to healthcare professionals.

Types of Pharmaceutical Advertising

- **A. Prescription Drug (Rx) Advertising:** Targeted exclusively at healthcare professionals (HCPs). Cannot be advertised to the general public in India.
 - Medical Journal Advertising: Scientific ads in peer-reviewed journals (detailed in Section 7).
 - Direct-to-Physician (DTP) Advertising: Product mailers, emailers, doctor portal ads, e-detailing.
 - Professional Publication Advertising: Ads in medical newsletters, hospital bulletins, specialty magazines.
- **B. Over-the-Counter (OTC) Advertising:** Direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising is permitted for non-prescription products.
 - Television Commercials: Highest reach; ideal for OTC blockbusters — Crocin, Eno, Dettol, Vicks.
 - Radio Advertising: Regional reach; effective for rural OTC markets in India.
 - Print Advertising: Newspapers and magazines — lifestyle/health publications for wellness products.
 - Outdoor Advertising: Hoardings, bus shelters, transit ads for OTC products near pharmacies.
 - Digital Advertising: Google Ads, social media ads, YouTube — growing rapidly for OTC brands.

AIDA Model in Pharmaceutical Advertising

AIDA Stage	Objective	Pharmaceutical Application
Attention (A)	Capture the physician/patient's attention	Striking headline in journal ad; catchy OTC TV jingle

AIDA Stage	Objective	Pharmaceutical Application
Interest (I)	Build interest in the product's benefits	Clinical data presentation; patient case study narrative
Desire (D)	Create desire to prescribe or purchase	Comparative efficacy charts; patient outcome statistics; testimonials
Action (A)	Drive prescribing or purchase behaviour	Call-to-action: 'Try for your next 5 patients' or 'Ask for Crocin at your pharmacy'

Advantages and Limitations of Pharma Advertising

Advantages	Limitations
Reaches large audience simultaneously	Cannot target individual physicians specifically
Builds brand awareness and recognition	Expensive; high cost per impression
Reinforces MR detailing messages	Non-personal; no two-way communication
Consistent message across all regions	Regulated — Rx drugs restricted to HCP-only channels
Effective for OTC consumer reach	Risk of misleading claims; regulatory scrutiny

DIRECT MAIL PROMOTION

Definition

Direct mail is a form of direct marketing in which pharmaceutical companies send promotional materials — physical mailers, letters, product cards, clinical data reprints, or brochures — directly to physicians at their clinics or homes to communicate product information and stimulate prescribing.

Types of Direct Mail Materials in Pharma

- **Product Mailer / Detailing Card:** Folded card containing key product messages, dosage, and clinical highlights. Sent when MR access is difficult.
- **Clinical Reprint Mailer:** Reprint of a published clinical trial/paper in a reputed journal, sent to targeted specialists with a cover letter.
- **Newsletter:** Periodic publication (monthly/quarterly) covering therapeutic area updates, company news, new product information.
- **Thank You / Follow-Up Letter:** Personalised letter from the company's Medical Director after a physician attends a CME or symposium.


- **Product Announcement Card:** A postcard-sized announcement for new product launch, new indication approval, or new dosage form.
- **Email Mailer (Digital Direct Mail):** Electronic version of physical mailers; HTML-designed emails sent to opted-in physician databases.

Advantages of Direct Mail

- Highly targeted — can be directed to specific physician specialties (e.g., only cardiologists for an antihypertensive drug).
- Personalised communication — can include the physician's name and area of practice.
- Reaches physicians who are difficult to access face-to-face (busy specialists, gatekept clinics).
- Allows detailed scientific information to be communicated in print.
- Measurable — response rates can be tracked (for email campaigns: open rate, click rate).
- Economical compared to personal selling and CME programs.

Limitations of Direct Mail

- Low response/open rate — many mailers discarded or emails unread ('junk mail' problem).
- Cannot facilitate two-way communication or address physician objections.
- Requires accurate and updated physician database (address, specialty, prescribing profile).
- Ethical concerns — direct mail with gifts or inappropriate incentives violates UCPMP.
- Print direct mail is declining as digital alternatives offer faster, cheaper reach.

 **Remember:** BEST PRACTICE: Direct mail is most effective when used in combination with MR visits — send a clinical reprint mailer BEFORE the MR's next call to prime the physician and enhance the detailing impact.

MEDICAL JOURNALS AS PROMOTIONAL TOOL

Definition & Importance

Medical journal advertising involves placing paid promotional advertisements for prescription drugs in peer-reviewed or specialist medical journals that are read by the target physician audience. Journal advertising lends scientific credibility to pharmaceutical promotion, as it appears alongside peer-reviewed clinical research.

Types of Medical Journal Advertising

- **Full-Page Display Ads:** High-impact ads with product image, brand name, key clinical claim, and prescribing information. Most common format.


- **Half-Page / Quarter-Page Ads:** Smaller, more affordable; used for product reminders and new indication announcements.
- **Gatefold (Cover) Ads:** Premium, high-visibility ads on the front/back cover of the journal — highest readership.
- **Sponsored Supplements:** Company-sponsored special issues or supplement sections featuring articles on a therapeutic area — powerful credibility-building tool.
- **Sponsored Articles/Advertorials:** Educational content written or sponsored by the pharma company on a disease or drug — must be labelled as 'sponsored' per regulatory norms.
- **Insert Cards:** Loose inserts placed inside the journal — can include response cards, product samples, or CME invitations.

Major Medical Journals Used in India

Journal	Target Specialty	Publisher
Journal of the Association of Physicians of India (JAPI)	General Medicine / Internal Medicine	API (Association of Physicians of India)
Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR)	Broad medical specialties	ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research)
Indian Heart Journal	Cardiology	Cardiological Society of India
Indian Journal of Pharmacology (IJP)	Pharmacology	IPS (Indian Pharmacological Society)
Indian Pediatrics	Paediatrics	Indian Academy of Pediatrics
Indian Journal of Psychiatry	Psychiatry	Indian Psychiatric Society
Journal of Diabetology	Endocrinology / Diabetes	RSSDI

Criteria for Journal Ad Compliance

- All claims must be accurate, balanced, and supported by peer-reviewed evidence.
- Prescribing information (dosage, contraindications, side effects) must be included.
- No misleading or exaggerated claims are permitted (ASCI and UCPMP guidelines).
- Safety information must be equally prominent as efficacy claims.
- Reference to clinical studies must be accurate and verifiable.

 **Point:** Journal advertising is particularly effective for specialist drugs — an oncology drug's ad in Indian Journal of Cancer reaches the exact target audience (oncologists) with scientific credibility.

DRUG SAMPLING PROGRAMS

Definition

Drug sampling (also called sample distribution or detailing samples) is the practice of providing free trial quantities of a pharmaceutical product to physicians, who use them to initiate therapy in patients and evaluate the drug's clinical performance before committing to regular prescribing.

Objectives of Drug Sampling

- Encourage trial prescribing — physician experiences the drug firsthand before writing commercial prescriptions.
- Remove cost barrier — patient receives free initial treatment, increasing acceptance and compliance.
- Build physician confidence in the product's efficacy and tolerability.
- Accelerate prescription generation for new product launches.
- Demonstrate the company's confidence in the product's performance.

Regulatory Guidelines for Drug Sampling in India


- Samples of Schedule H drugs can only be distributed to registered medical practitioners (RMPs).
- Sample packs must be clearly labelled 'SAMPLE — NOT FOR SALE' in red colour.
- Sample quantity is limited — typically a strip of 4–10 tablets or a 30 mL bottle.
- Physician's signature on sample receipt register is mandatory for controlled substances.
- UCPMP limits the value and frequency of samples to prevent misuse.
- Samples of Schedule X (narcotic) drugs are strictly prohibited.

Advantages of Drug Sampling

- Most powerful tool for new product launches — immediate physician trial.
- Creates direct product experience — 'seeing is believing' for the physician.
- Builds goodwill between MR and physician.
- Helps identify side effects before widespread use — real-world safety signal.

Disadvantages of Drug Sampling

- Very high cost — sample production, packaging, and distribution are expensive.
- Risk of sample diversion — samples entering grey market and being sold illegally.
- Regulatory compliance burden — strict documentation requirements.
- Not all drugs are suitable for sampling (injectables, temperature-sensitive products).
- Environmental waste — unused samples contribute to pharmaceutical waste.

 **Remember:** MARKET INSIGHT: Studies show that physicians who receive samples of a new drug are 2–3 times more likely to prescribe it. Sampling is considered the single most effective tool for new drug launches.

RETAILING IN PHARMACEUTICAL PROMOTION

Definition & Importance


Pharmaceutical retailing refers to promotional activities directed at the retail pharmacy (chemist) level — the final point where the drug reaches the patient. Retail pharmacists play a dual role as both sales channel and promotional intermediary, especially for OTC products and branded generics.

Retail Promotional Tools in Pharma

- **Trade Discounts / Cash Discounts:** Extra percentage margins offered to retailers — e.g., '10+2 scheme' (buy 10 strips, get 2 free). Incentivises stocking and recommendation.
- **Point-of-Sale (POS) Displays:** Window displays, shelf talkers, pop-up standees, product posters at the pharmacy — effective for OTC products. Captures impulse purchase.
- **Pharmacist Detailing:** Company's retail sales force (PSR — Pharmacy Sales Representative) visits pharmacists to detail product range, inform about schemes, and build relationships.
- **Retail Contests / Loyalty Programs:** Incentive programs for pharmacists — gift vouchers, travel programs for achieving sales targets. (Regulated by UCPMP for ethical limits.)
- **Pharmacist Training Programs:** Free training workshops on disease management and counselling — builds pharmacist's product knowledge and advocacy.
- **In-Store Health Camps:** Organising health check-up camps at pharmacy premises — increases foot traffic and brand association.
- **Product Bundling / Value Packs:** Combo packs — e.g., Calcium supplement + Vitamin D pack; Cold tablet + Nasal spray combo.
- **Digital Pharmacy Platforms:** 1mg, PharmEasy, Netmeds — digital shelf visibility; sponsored listings; online prescription processing.

Pharmacist's Role in OTC Sales

- Pharmacist recommendation is the single most important purchase driver for OTC products.
- Studies show 60–70% of OTC purchases are influenced by pharmacist recommendation.
- Companies invest heavily in pharmacist relationship building and product education.
- Pharmacist acts as a 'silent salesperson' for OTC brands at the retail counter.

 **Point:** The Indian retail pharmacy market has over 9 lakh retail chemist shops. Reaching all of them requires a structured Retail Coverage Plan — distinguishing between chemist stockists, semi-wholesale chemists, and retail chemists.

MEDICAL EXHIBITIONS & CONFERENCES

Definition

Medical exhibitions (pharmaceutical exhibitions) are trade shows and professional conferences where pharmaceutical companies set up stalls/booths to display their product range, distribute literature, and interact with healthcare professionals who attend the event. These are typically organised alongside major medical association conferences.

Types of Pharmaceutical Exhibitions & Events

- **National Medical Conferences:** Annual conferences of major medical associations where pharma companies exhibit — e.g., APICON (Association of Physicians of India), RSSDI (Diabetes), CSI (Cardiology), IPA (Indian Pharmaceutical Association).
- **State/Regional Medical Conferences:** State chapter conferences — smaller scale but targeted regional physician reach.
- **CME Programs (Continuing Medical Education):** Educational meetings organised by pharma companies at hotels or hospitals — physicians earn CME credits. Single company or multi-company events.
- **Small Group Meetings (SGM) / Round Table Discussions (RTD):** 3–15 physicians meeting at clinic/hospital level with KOL speaker and company MR — most intimate and impactful format.
- **International Congresses:** ACC (American College of Cardiology), IDF (International Diabetes Federation) — multinational companies present at global events.
- **Product Launch Events:** Dedicated event for launching a new drug — with KOL presentations, clinical data, product demonstrations.

Pharmaceutical Exhibition Stall Design Principles

- Eye-catching, brand-consistent design using company colours and logo.
- Product display panels with clinical data, efficacy charts, and positioning statements.
- Interactive digital screens, kiosks, and demonstration models for innovative delivery systems.
- Trained medical science liaisons (MSLs) or senior product managers at the stall.
- Giveaways: Branded stationery, pens, notepads, screen cleaners (within UCPMP limits).
- Product literature, reprints, and monographs available for physician pickup.

Advantages of Medical Exhibitions

- Reaches a large, concentrated group of targeted physicians at one location.
- Creates brand visibility in a professional, peer-respected environment.
- Opportunity for senior company officials and physicians to interact directly.
- Competitive intelligence — observe competitor booths and offerings.
- Platform for announcing new research data, new products, and new indications.

- Builds credibility through association with prestigious medical bodies.

CME (Continuing Medical Education) — Detailed

CME programs are structured educational meetings where physicians earn accredited educational credits.

From a pharma marketing perspective, CME programs are a powerful but heavily regulated tool:

- Sponsoring a CME allows a company to educate physicians about a disease area where their product is positioned.
- CME must be educational, not purely promotional — content must be scientifically objective.
- KOL (Key Opinion Leader) speaker must be independent; cannot be a paid company spokesperson during the CME session itself.
- Hospitality for physicians attending CME must be modest and directly related to the educational event (per UCPMP).
- CME programs organised by professional bodies (like API, IMA) are more credible than company-organised programs.

★ **Exam Tip:** UCPMP restricts pharma companies from sponsoring overseas CMEs/conferences for physicians. International travel for educational purposes is no longer permitted under the code.

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) IN PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETING

Definition

Public Relations (PR) is the management function that builds and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between a pharmaceutical company and its various publics — patients, physicians, government, media, investors, and the general community. Unlike advertising, PR is often not paid — it works through earned media and goodwill.

Publics Targeted by Pharma PR

- **Medical Community:** Physicians, pharmacists, nurses — building scientific credibility and trust through clinical data publications, KOL programs.
- **General Public / Patients:** Building disease awareness, patient support groups, health literacy campaigns.
- **Government & Regulatory Bodies:** Maintaining positive relations with CDSCO, Ministry of Health, pricing authorities — facilitates approvals and policy advocacy.
- **Media:** Journalists, health correspondents — press releases, media briefings, product launch press conferences.

- **Investors & Financial Community:** Communicating pipeline strength, financial performance, and growth strategy.
- **Internal Public (Employees):** Building employee pride, motivation, and brand advocacy — internal newsletters, achievements communication.

Pharmaceutical PR Tools & Activities

- **Press Releases:** Announcing new drug approvals, clinical trial results, strategic partnerships — distributed to health journalists and media houses.
- **Media Briefings & Press Conferences:** Presenting new product launches, major research findings — often timed with regulatory approval.
- **Disease Awareness Campaigns:** Non-branded campaigns educating the public about a disease — e.g., 'World Diabetes Day' campaign, 'TB Harega Desh Jeetega' (India). Builds disease awareness that indirectly benefits related drug brands.
- **Patient Support Programs (PSP):** Programs helping patients with drug access, compliance support, disease monitoring — e.g., free diabetes monitoring kits, toll-free patient helpline, patient adherence apps.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Free health camps, mobile health clinics, blood donation drives, vaccine distribution in rural areas — mandated by Companies Act 2013 (2% of net profit for eligible companies).
- **Crisis Management:** Handling product recalls, adverse event reports, and quality controversies through transparent, proactive communication.
- **KOL (Key Opinion Leader) Programs:** Building relationships with eminent physicians who influence peers — advisory boards, speaker programs, research grants.
- **Sponsorships:** Sponsoring medical association conferences, health publication awards, pharmacy education programs.

Advantages of PR over Advertising

Aspect	Public Relations	Advertising
Cost	Lower — earned media coverage is free	High — paid placement costs
Credibility	High — third-party endorsement (news coverage, journal editorial)	Lower — known to be paid, self-promotional
Control	Limited — media may edit or reject the story	Full control over message and timing
Reach	Can be broad but unpredictable	Predictable reach with defined audience

Aspect	Public Relations	Advertising
Shelf Life	A news story or scientific publication has lasting impact	Lasts only as long as the campaign budget

Point: The Novo Nordisk 'Changing Diabetes' campaign and Roche's cancer awareness PR programs are globally recognised examples of pharmaceutical PR that build disease awareness while strengthening brand positioning.

ONLINE PROMOTIONAL TECHNIQUES FOR OTC PRODUCTS

Introduction

Digital/online promotion has emerged as the fastest-growing promotional channel for pharmaceutical OTC products in India. With over 900 million internet users and 600 million smartphone users in India, digital platforms offer unprecedented reach, targeting precision, and cost-effectiveness for OTC brands.

Online Promotional Tools for OTC Pharmaceutical Products

A. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

- Optimising the brand/product website to rank higher in organic Google search results for relevant health queries.
- Example: A brand like 'Zandu Balm' optimising for search terms like 'pain relief cream', 'fast pain relief', 'back pain gel' to appear on page 1 of Google results.
- Content-driven SEO: Blog posts, health articles, symptom guides — attract organic traffic and build brand authority.
- Local SEO: Helps pharmacy chains rank for 'pharmacy near me' searches.

B. Search Engine Marketing (SEM) / Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

- Paid advertising on Google/Bing — displaying ads when users search for related health terms.
- Google Ads (Search + Display Network) — immediate visibility, measurable ROI.
- Example: Eno antacid bidding on keywords like 'acidity relief', 'gas problem solution', 'antacid tablets.'
- Remarketing/Retargeting: Showing ads to users who have previously visited the product website.

C. Social Media Marketing (SMM)

- Facebook & Instagram: Largest OTC audience reach; image/video ads, Stories, Reels.
- YouTube: Video ads — pre-roll ads before health content; product demonstration videos.
- Twitter/X: Disease awareness conversations, trending health topics.

- WhatsApp Business: Customer support, prescription reminder messages, health tips.
- Pinterest: Wellness and beauty-health OTC products (nutraceuticals, skincare).

Social Media Content Strategy for OTC Pharma:

- **Educational Content:** Health tips, disease prevention advice — builds trust and organic following.
- **User-Generated Content (UGC):** Patient testimonials, recovery stories — powerful social proof.
- **Influencer Marketing:** Partnering with health influencers, fitness bloggers, patient advocates.
- **Interactive Content:** Health quizzes, symptom checkers, polls — increase engagement.
- **Live Sessions:** Facebook/Instagram Live with healthcare professionals — Q&A on health topics.

D. Influencer Marketing

- Partnering with social media health influencers — doctors, dietitians, fitness coaches — to promote OTC wellness products.
- Micro-influencers (10K–100K followers): Higher engagement rate, more authentic.
- Macro-influencers (1M+ followers): Broader reach for mass OTC products.
- Example: A nutraceutical brand partnering with a fitness influencer on YouTube to promote protein supplements and multivitamins.
- ASCI Guidelines: Influencer posts must be clearly labelled as 'Paid Partnership' or 'Advertisement.'

E. E-Pharmacy Platforms

- 1mg, PharmEasy, Netmeds, Apollo Pharmacy, Tata Health — India's major e-pharmacy platforms.
- Sponsored product listings: Priority placement in search results for specific keywords.
- Brand stores: Dedicated brand page on the platform with full product range.
- Flash sales and discount promotions: Timed offers increasing conversion.
- Customer reviews and ratings: Powerful social proof for OTC product selection.
- OTC brands benefit from push notifications and email marketing from these platforms.

F. Content Marketing

- Health blogs and articles on brand website — attract organic traffic through informative content.
- Video content: 'How to use', mechanism of action animations, patient education videos on YouTube.
- Infographics: Disease statistics, drug comparison charts — shareable on social media.
- Podcasts: Sponsored health podcasts reaching educated urban consumers.
- Email newsletters: Monthly health tips emails to subscribed patient database.

G. Mobile Marketing / App-Based Promotion


- Branded health apps: Symptom checker, pill reminder, diet tracker — with integrated OTC product recommendations.
- In-app advertising: Banner and interstitial ads in popular health/fitness apps.
- SMS Marketing: Promotional messages, discount coupon codes sent to opted-in consumer database.
- WhatsApp Campaigns: Product information, health tips, reorder reminders through WhatsApp Business API.

H. Online Video Marketing

- YouTube Pre-roll Ads: Ads shown before health-related videos — precise targeting by health interest.
- OTT Platform Ads: Ads on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar — premium urban demographic reach.
- Short-form Videos: Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts — 15–60 second product demos and health awareness content.
- Explainer Videos: Animated videos explaining disease mechanism and how the OTC drug works.

I. Online Reputation Management (ORM)

- Monitoring and managing online reviews, ratings, and brand mentions.
- Responding to negative reviews on Google Maps, e-pharmacy platforms, and social media.
- Building positive online brand image through strategic content and earned media.

 **Point:** India's digital pharma marketing is growing at 30%+ annually. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated pharma's shift to digital — e-detailing for Rx drugs and digital advertising for OTC brands became mainstream in 2020–2023.

Comparison: Traditional vs. Online Promotion for OTC Products

Parameter	Traditional Promotion	Online / Digital Promotion
Reach	Mass reach (TV, radio) or limited (print)	Targeted reach with demographic/interest filters
Cost	High (TV commercials cost crores)	Flexible — from ₹500 to crores; pay-per-click
Measurement	Difficult — estimated audience (TRP, readership)	Highly measurable — clicks, impressions, conversions, ROI

Parameter	Traditional Promotion	Online / Digital Promotion
Targeting	Broad demographic targeting only	Precise targeting — age, location, health interest, behaviour
Speed	Slow — production and booking lead time	Fast — campaigns can go live within hours
Interaction	One-way communication	Two-way — comments, shares, reviews, chatbots
Personalisation	Not possible	Highly personalised — dynamic ads based on user behaviour

★ **Exam Tip:** Online promotion for OTC is a high-weightage topic — be prepared to write 5+ online tools with examples for pharma OTC brands. Always mention regulatory aspects (ASCI guidelines, influencer disclosure requirements).

INTEGRATED PHARMACEUTICAL COMMUNICATION PLAN

An Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) plan combines multiple promotional tools synergistically to deliver a consistent, compelling message to target audiences across all touchpoints. In pharma, a complete promotional plan for an Rx drug might look like:

Quarter	Rx Drug Promotional Activities
Q1 (Jan–Mar) — Launch Phase	MR deployment & training → Sampling campaign → KOL CME programs → Journal ad (launch issue) → Direct mail to specialist database → Press release on approval
Q2 (Apr–Jun) — Build Awareness	Intensified MR calls → Regional CME programs → Journal ad (follow-up) → Clinical reprint mailer → SGMs with key prescribers → E-detailing campaign
Q3 (Jul–Sep) — Build Preference	Rx tracking & ABC doctor analysis → High-prescriber reward programs → Conference exhibition → Patient support program launch → Digital platform for HCP education

Quarter	Rx Drug Promotional Activities
Q4 (Oct–Dec) — Sustain & Grow	Annual doctor meet → Prescription contest for MRs → Year-end gift (UCPMP compliant) → CME with national KOL → Next year planning

EXPECTED EXAM QUESTIONS — UNIT III

★ **Exam Tip:** Unit III is the highest-weightage unit in BP803ET. Personal Selling, Promotional Mix, Sampling, and Online Promotion appear in almost every examination.

Long Answer Questions (10 marks):

- Describe the various methods of promotion used in pharmaceutical marketing. Explain the determinants that influence the choice of promotional mix.
- Write a detailed note on personal selling as a promotional tool in the pharmaceutical industry. Describe the detailing process and the role of the Medical Representative.
- Explain the concept of promotional budget. Describe the different methods of setting a promotional budget in pharmaceutical marketing with their advantages and disadvantages.
- Write a comprehensive essay on online promotional techniques used for OTC pharmaceutical products in India.
- What is drug sampling? Explain the objectives, regulatory requirements, advantages, and limitations of drug sampling programs in India.
- Discuss the role of Public Relations in pharmaceutical marketing. Explain the various PR tools used by pharmaceutical companies.

Short Answer Questions (5 marks):

- Differentiate between push and pull promotional strategies in pharmaceutical marketing.
- Write a short note on medical journal advertising as a promotional tool.
- Explain the ABC classification of doctors and its significance in pharmaceutical personal selling.
- Write a short note on the UCPMP and its significance in pharmaceutical marketing.
- What is CME? Explain its importance and regulatory considerations in pharma promotion.
- Describe the role of the retail pharmacist in pharmaceutical promotion.
- Compare traditional and digital promotional strategies for OTC pharmaceutical products.

—Best Of Luck For Your Exam—

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