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With Record Number of Uninsured, Americans Turn To Foreign Pharmacies For Lowest-Cost Prescription Drugs

With the economy struggling, and a record 47 million Americans uninsured, or 15.8 percent of the U.S. population, a growing number of consumers are buying their prescription drugs from foreign pharmacies.

/24-7PressRelease/ - Chennai, India, June 13, 2008 -- With the number of uninsured Americans at a record 47 million, the highest number in more than 20 years*, a growing number of U.S. consumers are buying their prescription drugs from foreign pharmacies, some as far as 8,000 miles away in India. (*Source: US Census, Figure 6, page 27 of 78, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/p60-233.pdf>). There, they can access the highest quality brand-name and generic drugs at up to 90 percent savings off U.S. prices.

While a few years ago, many U.S. consumers shopped at Canadian online pharmacies to find cheap drug prices, an increasing number of seniors especially have discovered India as a "discount paradise" for even lower-cost medications, taken by millions of consumers worldwide.

"Cecilia," an uninsured senior in the Tampa, Florida suburb of Oldsmar, can't afford to buy her high blood pressure and arthritis drugs from her local pharmacy. The same with "Rex," a 72-year-old uninsured Houston veteran, who takes several medications to treat emphysema and COPD. They both are buying their drugs from a licensed pharmacy in India.

"American consumers are smart and know an amazing deal when they find it," said Pradeep Dadha, who runs InternationalDrugMart.com, a licensed pharmacy in Chennai, India's fourth largest city and a major business center. "This year our U.S. sales have climbed 25 percent over last year. Every day, we fill and mail about 250 orders to our uninsured American patients," Dadha said. "Our U.S. customers are mainly 50 to 64-year olds that don't yet have Medicare coverage, and other uninsured people of all ages. Most of our new business comes from word-of-mouth from our customers that recognize that they cannot find a better buy anywhere else, and they tell their friends and neighbors."

Their customers are pleased with the money-saving pharmacy.

"International Drug Mart has been a godsend because we (seniors) can't afford U.S. drug companies' high costs," said Rex.

50 to 90 Percent Price Differences

Many medications in India cost 50 to 90 percent less than U.S. retail prices because the Indian government, like that of most countries worldwide, controls drug pricing. Also, Indian pharmacies can sell cheaper, generic versions of Lipitor, Diovan and other expensive brand-name drugs for which generic medications are typically unavailable at U.S. and Canadian pharmacies. While generics can go to market quickly in India, the United States has strict U.S. drug patent protections that often prevent generics from coming to market for years. This gives Indian pharmacies a distinct price advantage.

For example, the cholesterol lowering drug Lipitor (40mg/90tablets) costs \$361.99 at CVS.com, a U.S. online pharmacy. In comparison, InternationalDrugMart.com sells a generic version of the identical drug for \$127.31, a 65 percent savings. And, the high blood pressure medication Diovan (160mg/90tabs) costs \$224.68 at Walmart.com, a U.S. discount pharmacy. At InternationalDrugMart.com, Generic Diovan is \$88.07, a 61 percent savings. (All prices in US\$ as of 6 June 2008 and subject to change) Neither U.S. pharmacy sells generic versions of either drug.

Visitors to the Indian pharmacy's website can obtain drug prices in less than 30 seconds time, and all prices are marked in U.S. dollars.

Dadha's staff of 10 people, includes two licensed pharmacists that manage orders for U.S. and other international customers and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When a U.S. order arrives, his team follows a careful and stringent four-step safety process to complete it. Finished orders are typically sent out one to two business days after receipt. They also serve customers in other countries including the UK, France, Switzerland, Japan and Canada.

"Our U.S. customers urgently need their discount-priced medications so we work very fast," said Dadha, who like many of his U.S. counterparts, counts on his Blackberry phone to send quick text messages to business associates and suppliers during his 15-hour work days.

Dadha never would have dreamed that he would one day serve U.S. customers.

"I couldn't imagine that there were customers that because of financial constraints would be on the brink of deciding whether they could afford their medications or their food, but not both -- especially in the U.S. It gives me considerable satisfaction to know that we can help American customers, and that they don't need to sacrifice one for the other," Dadha added.

As a testament to India's low drug prices, Dadha says several Indian pharmacies fill orders for Canadian mail order pharmacies serving American customers.

Customers Protect Their Health

Indian drugs are usually made there by world-class drug companies recognized for high quality including Wyeth, Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline and Novartis. And, leading Indian generic drug companies produce generic versions of many medications that they distribute for sale in India and worldwide. These companies include firms Ranbaxy, CIPLA, Torrent Pharmaceuticals and Sun Pharma.

While the U.S. government says that it is usually illegal for Americans to buy drugs overseas that isn't preventing cost-conscious seniors from protecting their good health. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been focused on finding rogue pharmacies, not on tracking down a fixed-income 'grandma' who is buying cheaper drugs overseas for her personal use.

Ironically, many prescription drugs bought at U.S. pharmacies are made overseas. According to the Newark Star-Ledger (May 2, 2008), "An estimated four out of 10 prescription drugs sold in the United States are manufactured abroad, and about 80 percent of the active pharmaceutical ingredients used by U.S. manufacturers to make prescription drugs are imported."

The U.S. has the highest drug prices in the world and is one of few countries that does not control prices that drugmakers charge. This puts the uninsured, or 15.8 percent of the population, (Source: US Census, same as graph #3), and many that cannot afford the steep costs, at greatest risk.

To reach InternationalDrugMart.com, visit its website at <http://www.internationaldrugmart.com> or call toll-free, 1-866-419-7475. Pharmacy phone hours are 9:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern time (6:00 am to 5:00 pm Pacific). A prescription is required for prescription medications, and patients can order up to a three-month supply of drugs at one time. Regular air mail delivery costs US\$6.99 for any size order and takes about two to three weeks to arrive. The pharmacy is approved by PharmacyChecker.com, a leading independent pharmacy verification program.

MEDIA CONTACT: If you want to develop a story, and you wish to interview Pradeep Dadha, Managing Director of InternationalDrugMart.com, or a local customer of the pharmacy email Michael Pirages of Pirages Communications (Chicago) at mpirages@piragescom.com or call 773-769-1616 Michael also can provide color jpg photos of the InternationalDrugMart.com pharmacy.

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