CHAPTER – 8

THE E-REVOLUTION
Chapter 8 – The E - Revolution

8.1 Concept 143
8.2 Analysis and discussion 144
CHAPTER 8

THE E-REVOLUTION

8.1 Concept

The idea that organizations succeed by creating value is not novel. What is new, however, is how innovative business designs are delivering value. E-commerce is a fundamental component of e-business. It is primarily associated with buying and selling of goods and services over the Internet or private networks. E-business uses technology and E-commerce processes to build better customer relationship and create new value propositions. Electronic commerce is a technique used to exchange business information across the Internet. The information can range from the simplest data about the products or services to complex, multipart documents used among the groups of individuals or organizations to support extensive mutually beneficial transactions. An attempt has been made to study the impact of Internet and E-Commerce on the pharmaceutical brands. Primary data collected through “Depth Interviews” from experts with questions like application of Internet and E-commerce for an expert. This was done in the third and final stage of data collection and responses elicited from all the 140 experts.
8.2 Analysis and discussion:

The information explosion over the Internet, and print and electronic media resulted in a shift of power from doctor to patient. The growing awareness among patients has enabled them to take more responsible decisions regarding their treatment and options available. Many a time, patients browse the net before or after a visit to the doctor and update themselves on the latest practices concerning their ailment or disease. Many non-medical people might talk in medical jargon to the doctor because of this free flow of medical information. These changes have made medicine emerge from behind the curtain to be more accessible to the patient.

Information about health and medicine, which was held exclusively by the doctor earlier, is now out in the open and inexpensive too. Now a patient need not go to the extent of finding out the right textbook on medicine to do research on his illness. It is free on the net. This information explosion has now made it mandatory for doctors to update themselves on the latest so that they can keep up with the patient's knowledge base.

Eighty two per cent of the experts are of the opinion that E-commerce will help them to update their knowledge on the latest in the medicine through Continuing Medical Education programs offered by various foreign universities and agencies. All of them are of the opinion that this helps them in clarifying their specific queries on diseases, surgical procedures, drug interactions and allergies, etc., with other experts spread across the globe. They are also of the opinion with this latest information, product launching will be market driven.
Twenty seven per cent of the experts are of the opinion that Internet and E-commerce could result in more litigations and claims arising due to the negligence of doctors. In some of the areas, the experts have taken initiative to educate patients about the legal rights. In Kerala, Junior doctors union formed a Medical ombudsman panel comprising various experts to educate and arbitrate on medico-legal issues. More than eighty percent believe that in case **pharmaceutical brands are not meeting the expectations in terms of quality/efficacy there is the possibility of eroding the brand equity immediately.** This in turn will have tremendous impact on the company and as well as other brands manufactured by the company. This threat was there previously also, but the impact will be very high with the advent of Internet and E-commerce

Ninety per cent of the experts are of the opinion that E-commerce will result in reduction in waiting time of patients. The delay at the reception counter is a normal occurrence, especially in the caste of repeat visit where the staff has to physically locate the case sheet for the doctor. An online medical record makes the search in second. In a hospital such as Sankara Netralaya with a daily attendance of about 1,000 patients, the benefits already seen and resulted in smooth flow of patient traffic. Waiting at laboratories for obtaining results is another affair that many of the patients have to put up with the inconvenience. With an automated result reporting system, which is now standard with any hospital management system, waiting time can be brought down drastically.
Eighty seven per cent of the experts are of the opinion a faster and they can make informed decision. Majority of the experts are of the opinion that doctors at different departments, countries (in case, if it is necessary) can view the test results simultaneously and confer to take decisions, thereby providing efficient patient care. Another area where most of the experts agreed are possibilities of including pathological reports and MRI scans can be referred online to specialists in other cities. Reports of laboratory tests/observations of a specialist can be mailed to them directly. The reviewing doctors can attach their comments on the same and circulate it to the concerned specialist if required.

Most of the experts are of the opinion that video applications are the Net’s future. Some of them even quoted Wockhardt’s visiting room in cyberspace. This visiting room is first in the world and an indication of how home grown imagination and software skill can make a difference to the daily lives of real people through the virtual world of the Net. Wockhardt is a plush hospital in the heart of India’s silicon heart, Bangalore, and so many patients had sons or daughters in the US. It helps that most of the request for virtual family visits, which allows relatives to see real time images of patients through audio and video files which can be downloaded on their computer. Now, from 4000 hits in the first month, the website now gets between 80,000 and 1,00,000 hits.

Majority of the experts are of the opinion that this high quality and timely information is the lifeblood for correct decision-making and for better patient care.
Many other points, which came out of discussion, are

- Better customer Service
- Patient education
- Efficient tracking of data
- Facility to consult experts without geographical constraints

However, most of them agreed that these issues would not have any impact on the pharmaceutical brand success or failure. But they are also of the opinion although the usage of e-commerce and internet has been limited so far, but they all are aware about these best practices makes world class perfection in the health care.