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Safe Point India, HMD Foundation appreciate Punjab CM's action

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The CMâ??s latest order comes in the wake of criticism & alarming concern raised by the Indian Medical Device Industry on the urgent need to amplify this order because restrictive practices can actually compel a user to reuse the old easily available syringes and thereby expose himself and all other members of community to various infections and health hazard of undetermined proportions adding to already huge burden of HIV/ Hep B /Hep C infections and a host of other diseases.



Hailing Punjab CM Amarinder Singh's prompt decision to revoke the ban on the sale of syringes without a prescription, Safe Point India and HMD Foundation appreciated and thanked CM Amarinder Singh for the much needed timely action.

After the order Safe Point India and HMD Foundation raised an alarming concern on the urgent need to amplify this order because restrictive practices can actually compel a user to reuse the old easily available syringes and thereby expose himself and all other members of community to various infections and health hazard of undetermined proportions adding to already huge burden of HIV/ Hep B /Hep C infections and a host of other diseases.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday revoked the ban on the sale of syringes without a prescription. The Chief Minister's Office has directed deputy commissioners across the state to issue orders to chemists to prepare an inventory of syringes and keep a record of their sale and the customers sold to.

"We do not know why the respective Deputy Commissioners issued such ban orders. There was no direction from the state government. We will amend it," said a functionary.

At least three district administrations, Faridkot, Bathinda and Fazilka have issued directives to medical stores to not sell syringes without a doctor's written prescription. The order issued by the deputy commissioner using the power under section 144 of CrPC will come into effect immediately and last till September 30, 2018.

"Instead of restriction to syringes access it would be more prudent to accelerate a switch to Auto Disable Syringes in Punjab and have a State policy similar to the one by Government of Andhra Pradesh to prevent reuse with the help of State Drug Controller to address this magnifying problem" said Pardeep Sareen, Chief General Manager-Marketing, Hindustan Syringe and Medical Devices Ltd.

Mr. Sareen said Punjab has the highest incidence of hepatitis B and C spreading from drug addicts to other patients in the already-challenged healthcare infrastructure.

"The order was distraught with trouble. We are thankful to CM Amarinder Singh for timely intervention. While the law exists in the US of syringe sale limited to prescription, this is not the case in India and the intent of solving a problem may be noble but the management tool being used is questionable and the wrong prescription as it will lead to bigger problem of infections being spread from Syringes reused. In other countries they promote free Needle exchange programs to addicts to motivate them not to share Syringes or reuse them " Said Mr Rajiv Nath , Jt. Mg. Director of Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices.

The disposable syringes available in market are subject to re-use. Numerous and periodic media reports and case studies have identified reuse of syringes and needles as a major cause of spread of diseases.

“In order to prevent reuse and contain spread of infection, it is advisable and recommended to use AD syringes specifically designed to prevent reuse. This reuse prevention has been strongly advocated by WHO, MoH&FW has been seeking manufacturers to add capacity of AD Syringes and the recently concluded HTA study from PGI chandigarh on safety engineered devices under aegis of Punjab government and DHR, MoH, GoI had again proven the cost effectiveness of this intervention ” emphasised Dr Ratti , Healthcare Advisor, Safe Point India

“Andhra Pradesh government has already taken a lead in this regard and issued instructions for 100% use of AD syringes in its public health facilities from 28th Jul 2018which is observed as World Hepatitis Day. Currently AD syringes are used in immunization programs only in most states though many Central Govt hospitals in Delhi are using these for years.” Dr. Ratti added.

Safe Point India and HMD Foundation which work in areas of promoting safe injection practices through policy advocacy and safe and proper use of injection practices including its safe disposal has been urging Central and State governments to adopt use of AD syringes in therapeutic practices also.

Safe Point India therefore urged that Punjab government order be suitably amended to include:

1. All prescriptions must specify use of AD syringes

2. It would be more prudent to accelerate a switch to Auto Disable Syringes in private sector in Punjab and have a State policy as done by Government of Andhra Pradesh (issued instructions for 100% use of AD syringes in its public health facilities from 28th Jul 2018 which is observed as World Hepatitis Day) to prevent reuse with help of State Drug Controller to address this magnifying problem in Punjab.

After holding a review meeting on drugs today, the chief minister will issue detailed guidelines on the sale of syringes to all Deputy Commissioners.