



National Governors Association's Prescription Drug Abuse Reduction Policy Academy

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP) is an international coalition committed to protecting patient safety globally and ensuring patient access to safe and legitimate online pharmacies in accordance with applicable laws. Whether online or offline, ASOP believes patients should have access to safe, regulator-approved medicine through legitimate and law-abiding pharmacies.

While the Internet is a valuable resource for patients seeking a more convenient method of purchasing medicine, issues clearly exist. As indicated in reports from the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, when an individual searches the Internet for medicine, that individual faces a marketplace where 96% of entities offering to sell drugs are illegitimate and operating in violation of U.S. law. These entities, known as "illegal online drug sellers", provide easy access to dangerous, addictive, and potentially lethal products.

In the United States, prescription drug abuse exceeds all other forms of illicit drug abuse combined (with the exception of marijuana), and prescription drug abuse has been tied to Internet use. A 2011 analysis in [Health Affairs](#) found that with every 10 percent increase in high-speed Internet use at the state level, associated treatment facility admissions for prescription drug abuse rose by 1 percent.

ASOP is pleased to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Prescription Drug Abuse Reduction Policy Academy to share recommendations for addressing illegal online drug sellers as part of a state's strategy to combat prescription drug abuse.

Policy Opportunities with Governors

- ❖ Support Federal legislation that aides law enforcement, enables and encourages responsible action by internet intermediaries, and improves patient access to safe online pharmacy, such as the Online Pharmacy Safety Act (S. 2002/H.R. 4095).
- ❖ Consider whether state legislation is needed to give law enforcement the authority and/or incentive to take action against internet intermediaries who knowingly facilitate illegal online drug sellers.
- ❖ Promote existing educational campaigns, such as FDA's BeSafeRx campaign and NABP's AwareRx campaign.

Policy Opportunities with State Attorney Generals

- ❖ Understand and use existing enforcement authorities to combat the activities of illegal online drug sellers, including the [Ryan Haight Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2008](#), which permits state attorney generals to initiate criminal proceedings in federal court against rogue online drug sellers, thereby helping states overcome jurisdictional hurdles to prosecuting online pharmacies based out-of-state.

- ❖ Increased oversight and enforcement against advertisers who offer services which violate of state and/or federal law, as illegal online drug sellers often directly pursue customers via mainstream communication channels, e.g., print ads, phone calls and advertising emails, over which state attorney generals could have jurisdiction.

Policy Opportunities with State Boards of Pharmacy

- ❖ Adopt clearly defined Internet pharmacy laws, including a requirement for applicants to list the URL of their online pharmacy website, if any, on state pharmacy license and renewal applications and include requirement to indicate if their pharmacy website uses an online prescribing questionnaire for prescribing.
- ❖ Require the domain name registrant for any website that delivers, distributes, dispenses or facilitates the sale of prescription drugs to residents in that state be registered with state pharmacy board as part of their state pharmacy license with no additional registration fee if the pharmacy provides their URL and does not facilitate or use an online prescribing questionnaire.
 - *Background:* Today, operators of most rogue online drug sellers use a third party to dispense prescriptions, a practice which allows website operators to deny or evade culpability for illegal activity. In all 50 states, a pharmacy that dispenses drugs within or into the state must register with the State Board of Pharmacy. There is no reason that an individual operating a website that facilitates the sale of prescription drugs should be held to different standards than an individual operating a pharmacy. NABP and LegitScript (Internet verification and monitoring service) are currently formalizing this idea in a report that will soon be made available.
- ❖ Support state prescription drug monitoring programs and participate in all states where such programs are available.
- ❖ Provide educational programs for students in elementary schools and high schools by state licensed pharmacists and other licensed healthcare professionals, through state and national pharmacy and medical associations, and also provide similar educational programs for parents and health care providers on preventing prescription drug abuse and abuse of other medications, including utilizing program resources from NABP's AwareRx Campaign, The Partnership at Drugfree.org and others.

