



ملتقى البحث العلمي

مركز بحوث الدراسات العلمية والطبية



The extent of use of online pharmacies in Saudi Arabia

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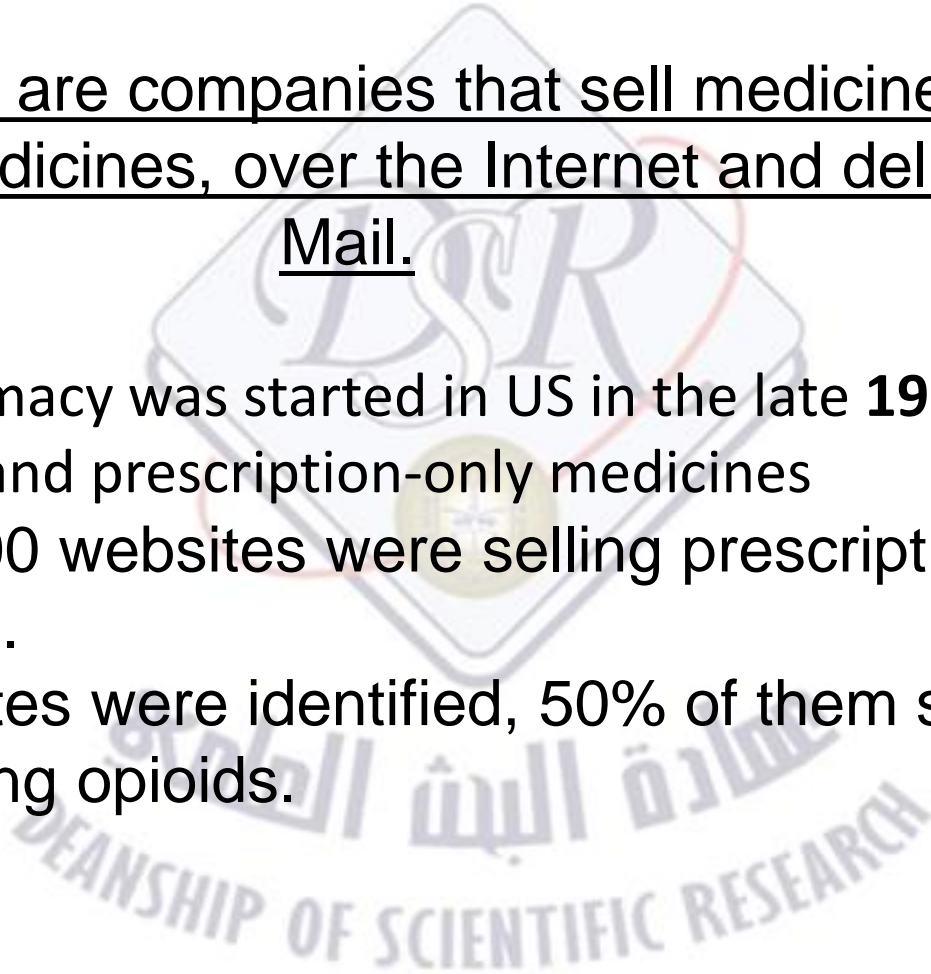
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INTRODUCTION:

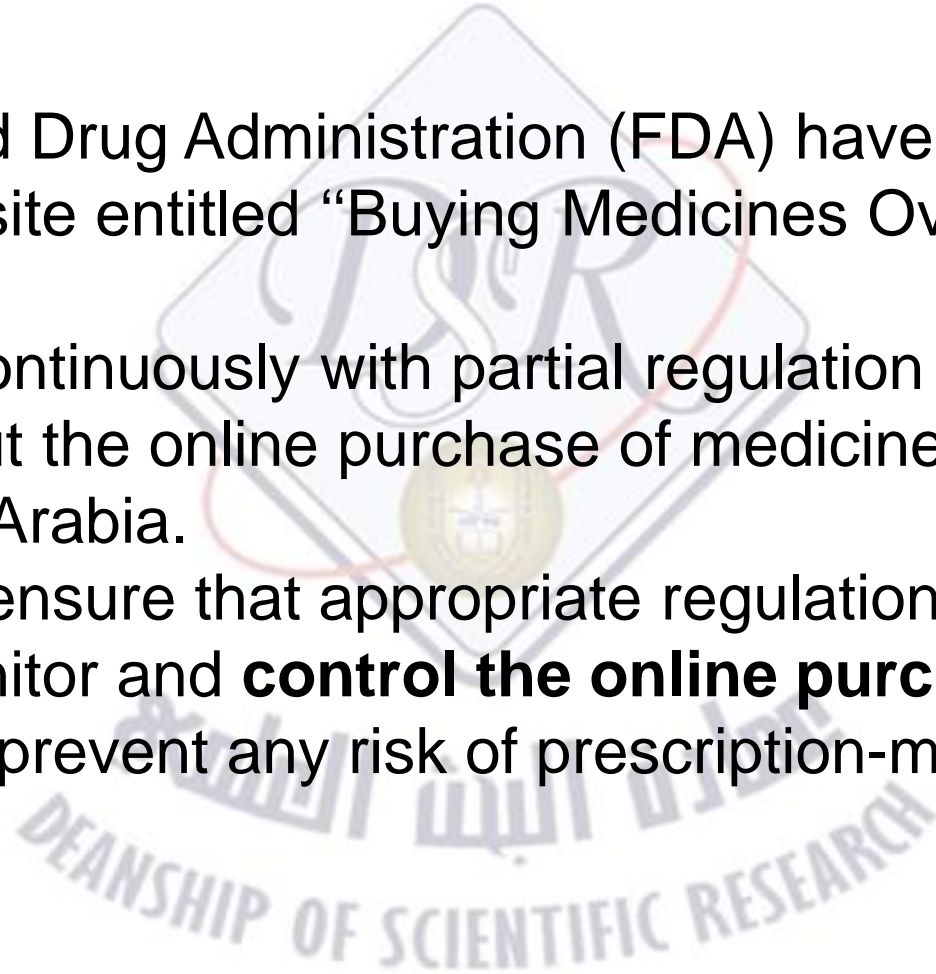
- Online pharmacies are companies that sell medicines, including prescription-only medicines, over the Internet and deliver them by Mail.
- The first online pharmacy was started in US in the late **1990s**, Sold both nonprescription and prescription-only medicines
- In US, around 5000 websites were selling prescription medicines in **2010**.
- In UK **2000** websites were identified, 50% of them sold analgesics including opioids.





INTRODUCTION cont...

- The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have a section on its website entitled “Buying Medicines Over the Internet”
- It is spreading continuously with partial regulation
 - Information about the online purchase of medicine is not available in Saudi Arabia.
 - It is important to ensure that appropriate regulations are put in place to monitor and **control the online purchase of medicines** and to prevent any risk of prescription-medicine **abuse.**





Aim:

To explore the extent of purchasing medicine online in Saudi Arabia.

Two main **objectives** will be sought;

1. The existence of such phenomenon
2. The reasons behind the willingness to purchase/not purchase medicine online.



METHODOLOGY:

- A review of related **literature** was done first.
- An Arabic-language questionnaire was **built** through different stages.
- Then **two experts** in pharmacy and medicine were asked to review the survey, following which a few amendments were made.
- **Clarity** of the questionnaire was examined by three pharmacists and three lay persons.
- **A pilot** study involving 10 subjects (pharmacists and lay persons) was undertaken to examine the final draft of the survey.
- SurveyMonkey program was used to develop the survey
- Distributed via email and social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter
- (June 2013- March 2014)



METHODOLOGY:

- Four main sections were created:

1. Investigating the respondents' experiences with online shopping.
2. Demographic information including age, gender, education, and monthly salary



METHODOLOGY cont...

3. Exploring the respondents' **experiences** of buying medicines online which include:

- Awareness of the **existence** of online pharmacies
- Previous **history** of buying medicines online
- Number of **times buying** medicines online
- The **quality** of medicines bought over the Internet
- Whether the website was **local or international**
- Whether a **prescription** was obtained beforehand
- Asked to provide a **prescription** or complete a survey about health status
- The **reason** for choosing to buy medicines online
- The **satisfaction** level with this process.



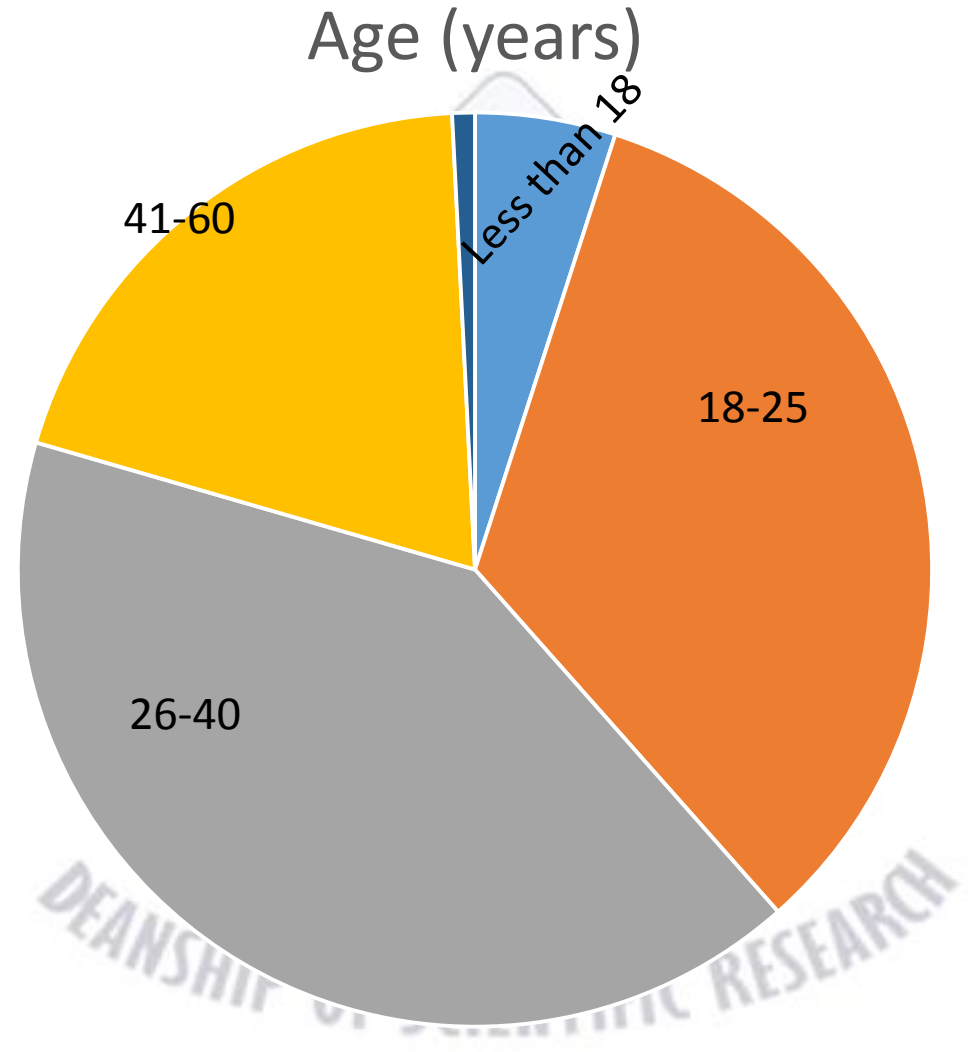
METHODOLOGY cont...

4. The **reasons** of willingness to buy medicines online in the future.
5. Two additional questions at the end of the questionnaire were asked:
 - Differentiate between **legal and illegal** online pharmacies
 - **Categories** of medicines they are willing to be available online.



RESULTS:

- A total of **633** responses were collected.
- 69% were **female**.
- 95% browsed on the internet.
- 67.6% had tried to **buy something online**, of whom 56.6% bought **clothing or shoes**.
- 61% had a **bachelor's degree**.
- Surprisingly, 38% of the respondents had **no income**.





RESULTScont

- Only 23.1% were aware of the **existence** of online pharmacies.
- 2.7% (17) had bought medicines over the Internet.
- Five respondents had tried to buy medicines online on one occasion
- Eight had tried 2–5 times
- One had tried 6–10 times
- Three had tried more than 10 times.
- 15 were satisfied with the process.



RESULTScont

- 3 believed that the medicines were of **better quality**.
- 16 indicated that the website was **international**,
- 2 **had a prescription** for the medicines they purchased online.
One had been asked to provide the prescription,
while the other one had been asked to answer a number of questions regarding his/her health status.



RESULTScont

Reasons for buying medicines online N= 17	Number
Unavailable in local market	8
Cheaper	7
More convenient	6
Good services such as home delivery and refill reminder by email	4
Available 24 hour, 7 day a week	3
Providing health information and some consultation	3
Easy delivery especially for those far from any community pharmacy	3
More privacy	2
Long waiting at community pharmacy	1



RESULTScont

Reasons for not buying medicines online: N=457	
No license	116
Quality of the medicine	85
Simple prescription	62
Extra money	45
No privacy and confidentiality	21



RESULTScont

- Future viewpoint of customers toward online pharmacy:

More than 40% of the respondents were **willing to buy medicine online** in the future.

- Categories chosen by 50% of respondents were **non-prescription drugs and cosmetics**.



CONCLUSION:

- The use of online pharmacies is not currently an issue in Saudi Arabia
- Most people are unaware of the existence of online pharmacies.
- Problems such as **registration issues** and the **quality of the products** sold should be addressed.

****Regulatory authorities and stakeholders could do much to encourage the safe use of online pharmacies, such as developing a logo to identify registered pharmacies and putting regulations in place to ensure the safety of the medicines that are sold****



Thank you

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