

Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2005

Introduction to the Disaster Management Act (DMA)

What is the Disaster Management Act (DMA)?

- The **Disaster Management Act, 2005** is a comprehensive legislation enacted by the Government of India to ensure effective disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery at national, state, and district levels.
- It defines structured roles for authorities and institutions in handling natural and man-made disasters, such as pandemics, floods, earthquakes, and chemical or biological threats.

Key Definitions

Disaster:

- A catastrophe, mishap, calamity, or grave occurrence—natural or man-made—that causes significant loss of life, human suffering, or damage to property and the environment.
- *Examples:* COVID-19 pandemic, Bhopal Gas Tragedy, floods, earthquakes, etc.

Disaster Management:

- A continuous and integrated process involving prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation.

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities of Pharmacists During Disasters

Legal Responsibilities:

- Comply with government orders on drug pricing, distribution, and sale.
- Maintain accurate documentation of drug transactions.
- Avoid sale or promotion of unauthorized treatments or unverified remedies.

Ethical Responsibilities:

- **Duty to Serve:** Continue serving the community during times of crisis.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Treat all patients fairly, regardless of background.
- **Integrity:** Avoid opportunistic practices such as price inflation.
- **Transparency:** Provide clear information on medicine availability, stock limitations, and usage.

Case Study: Pharmacists' Role During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- The DMA was actively invoked during the COVID-19 crisis:
 - Pharmacists were recognized as **essential service providers**.

- Movement restrictions were eased to ensure medicine supply chains remained functional.
- Price controls were imposed on sanitizers, masks, PPE kits, and drugs like hydroxychloroquine and remdesivir.
- Legal action was taken against pharmacies found guilty of hoarding, overpricing, or selling unauthorized products.
- Pharmacists supported **vaccination drives**, provided **telepharmacy services**, and counseled patients on drug safety and infection protocols.

Offenses and Penalties Under the DMA (Relevant to Pharmacy)

- **Hoarding of Essential Medicines:** May result in heavy fines, suspension of license, or imprisonment.
- **Disobeying Government Orders:** Punishable under sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Spreading False Health Information:** Liable for action under the DMA, Epidemic Diseases Act, and Information Technology laws.
- **General Penalty:** Up to 1 year of imprisonment, or 2 years if lives are endangered.

Structure and Authorities Under the DMA

1. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

- Headed by the Prime Minister.
- Frames national policies, plans, and guidelines.

2. State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMA)

- Headed by respective Chief Ministers.
- Develop and implements state-level disaster strategies.

3. District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA)

- Headed by District Collectors.
- Responsible for local-level planning, response, and enforcement.

Pharmacists must cooperate with these authorities when directed to:

- Prioritize and distribute life-saving medicines.
- Participate in emergency health services.
- Adjust pharmacy operation hours to public health needs.

Relevance of the DMA to Pharmacy Practice

1. **Emergency Drug Supply:** Ensure continuous availability of essential medicines during crises like COVID-19 or floods.
2. **Cold Chain Management:** Maintain proper storage of temperature-sensitive drugs (e.g., vaccines, insulin) even during power outages.
3. **Inventory Control:** Stock emergency kits, antidotes, disinfectants, and critical drugs as per official guidelines.
4. **First Responder Role:** Act as frontline responders by offering basic care, drug counseling, and triage support.
5. **Ethical Practice:** Avoid hoarding or inflating prices of essential medicines during emergencies.
6. **Controlled Substance Oversight:** Prevent misuse or diversion of controlled drugs during disasters through strict monitoring.

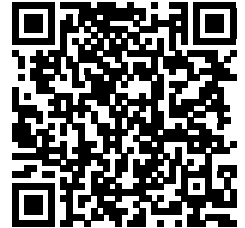


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