

Scienxt Journal of Recent Technology in Pharmaceutical Industry

Volume-2 // Issue-1 // Jan-June // Year-2024 // pp. 1-14

Yellow journalism in pharmacy

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Abstract:

This journal article covers the various parts of miscommunication including their reasons, types and examples that is conducted intentionally or unintentionally by mass media among masses regarding the medicine industry. This journal will briefly sum up the various aspects of false and deceptive news and leads that are brought about by the news channels/portals or newspapers. Reviews and interviews of various known/unknown personalities of various Mass – Media personnel's as well as of those in the medical industry. This journal aims at spreading awareness about how news about the medical industry is wrapped up or spiced up for some newspaper's own interests and hence converting those into irreverent or misleading hoax/news [3] I primarily got interested in working with this piece after witnessing the kind of hoax and false news that were spread by different nation and worldwide news mediums amid this pandemic. And also, in the due course of compiling this paper I came across an article through open source 'INDIA – MAGIC DRUGS & MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS' by Priyanka Rastogi and the article 'MEDICINE & MEDIA' by Susanna Appel and Anna Larson. After I got through these articles which are primarily the two articles compiled till date on this subject, a conclusion was drawn that Media and News Medium, which is the source of information to almost more than half of the population of the world, often publish misleading or false news due to increased monopoly in this field. And in this monopoly of the media world, the most affected and influenced industry is that of the edicine, which is a very sensitive topic to be talked or listened of. The only motive of this research article is to make people aware that Mass Media is not the very authentic source of medical news these days. As more days passed authenticity has deviated from place and moved towards hoaxes and attention seeking materials which are oftenharmful if relied on blindly [5].

1. Introduction:

Yellow Journalism, this term can also be tagged with the tagline ‘journalism without a soul’. Since the increased advent of the mass media organizations, which is in turn the result of our increased demand of infotainment and easy to access information, a popular process has also crept in this industry i.e., Yellow Journalism.

This term can better be defined by summing up the following points,

1. Any journalism that treats news in an unprofessional or unethical fashion has a term of Yellow Journalism.
2. Techniques in this process include exaggeration of news events, scandalous or untrue information.
3. Yellow Journalism includes badly-searched news and eye-catching headlines in order to sell as more information/newspapers as possible.

2. Characteristics of yellow journalism:

1. ‘Scary’ headlines often printed in **bold black** or Vibrant Red ink.
2. Many Photos often attractive/deceptive, some of them faked.
3. Made up Stories, Fake Interviews and misleading headlines.
4. Sunday Colored comics.
5. Campaigns for those who suffered abuse in any region or class.

3. Examples of yellow journalism used by popular newspapers (in history):

3.1. ‘The New York Times’ – Owned by Joseph Pulitzer [1]:

This paper used sensationalism; the paper ran stories about Crusades (standing behind a worthy cause). They also featured publicity stunts (places where reporters themselves took part in making news happen). They ran drawings, crime scenes and portrayals that were attention seeking and fake. They also held coupons and ran contests to increase their false publicities.



Illustration 1.0: Front page of 'THE NEW YORK TIMES' – MANIPULATIVE HEADLINES

3.2. 'The New York journal' – Owned by William Randolph Hearst [2]:

At the time of the inauguration of President McKinley, William hired a special train from Washington D.C, to New York with artists who drew pictures for a special issue to beat the other papers with pictures. The train broke a speed record from Washington to New York.



Illustration. 1.1: "THE NEW YORK JOURNAL" – Contests & Coupons

Around the turn of the century, people were taking great interest in the rebels happening in Cuba, there was a supposedly rebel by the Cuban people against the Spanish. To sell the newspapers both Hearst and Pulitzer made their reporters to manipulate the truth, and stated the news was spread as children and women killed by the Spanish, People starving on the streets etc.

4. Yellow journalism in the pharmacy world:

A large gap divides the scientific and journalist communities when it comes to deciding what is newsworthy. The ongoing nature of peer review in the scientific community makes it difficult to

report interesting advances in scientific discovery. Consequently, this can create a focus on the negative aspects of medicine and science; causing journalists to report on the mistakes of doctors or misconstruing the results of research. However, journalists are not the only ones to fault as scientists have also broadcast their promising initial research to the media in attempts to secure future funding. For example, research done by George Washington University in 1993 on in-vitro fertilization was warped by the media into a horrific foray into human cloning.

Not only the knowledge gap between the medical researchers and the journalists but also yellow journalism crests in due to the strive of some corporate media companies to make their newspapers leading or no. 1. Due to this reason, they often publish news or articles which deviate from the actual information that is accurate to some inaccurate piece of journals that catch viewer's attention more but yet create hoax or scientifically incorrect information.

Medical journalists also face challenges due to potential conflicts of interest. The pharmaceutical industry has sponsored journalism contests that carry large prizes in cash or in overseas trips. The Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ) urges journalists to consider these contests carefully before entering, and most journalists avoid them. The Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism, the supporting 501(c) (3) for AHCJ, does not accept industry funding. The National Association of Science Writers does not accept such funding. The changing nature of news media has caused more reporters to work freelance, outside of traditional news organizations such as major metropolitan newspapers, which may have created more ways to sidestep conflict-of-interest standards, and the rise of blogs has allowed nontraditional providers of news that lack these standards entirely.

5. Methodology [3]:

The various methods that were used in collection and compilation of the journal includes Surveys, Interviews and examining of various News Papers/Online Portals and recorded contents of various news channels all of the past two decades till date.

The step-by-step actions and movement taken for the sake of investigation of information regarding yellow journalism in pharmacy are stated below

6. Interviews [2]:

Interviews were taken of total 17 candidates which included, 4 Doctor (2 – General Physician, 1 – Dermatologist, 1 – Specialist in Medicine). 6 Registered Pharmacists currently work for different pharmaceutical companies (4 of Research & Development department, of Production department, 1 of Pharmacovigilance). 8 Journalists (2 from ABPAnanda, 1 from India Today, 2 from JDP News, 2 from HindustanTimes, and 1 from Globe TV).

Details of Interviewed Persons are as follows,

6.1. Doctors:

1. Dr. Bhaswarjyoti Saha (MBBS cal.)
2. Dr. Kiriti Saha (MBBS cal.)
3. Dr. Soumendra Saha (MBBS cal. – MD)
4. Dr. Sayantani Chakraborty (MBBS, MD, SCE in Dermatology)

6.2. Registered pharmacists:

1. Suman Dey (R&D – Glenmark Pharmaceuticals)
2. Abhijeet Karmakar (R&D – Caplet Pharmaceuticals)
3. Sumangal Dey (Pharmacovigilance – Cognizant)
4. Ritika Chakraborty (R&D - Novartis Pharmaceuticals –Posted in Germany)
5. Piyush Aggarwal (R&D – Caldia Pharmaceuticals)

7. Journalists:

1. Arko Mukherjee (Senior News Paper Editor – IndiaToday)
2. Amar Kundu (Reporter – Globe TV)
3. Rubina Liaqat (Senior Reporter – ABP Ananda)
4. Anjan Chowdhury (Advertising Head – ABP Ananda)
5. Samik Kundu (Senior Reporter – JDP News)
6. Suman Debnath (Editor – JDP News)

7. Ria Das (Reporter – Hindustan Times)
8. Sayani Nandi (Portal Department – Hindustan Times)

8. Surveys [3]:

Surveys were conducted among 4 persons from different age groups, starting from youth to the people of older generations.

This is to be stated that every one of the surveyed candidates were regular Readers of one or the other newspapers. And also, it is to be kept in Mind that it was verbally confirmed that the surveyed candidates were Well aware of the medicine and health industries as well as

On the other hand 6 of the candidates were confirmed to well aware of the Mass communication activities and their protocol or way of functioning.

The names of the surveyed persons and their current age in years are given below,

1. Sukanta Das (46 years) – Teacher, Biology.
2. Raj Singh (22 years) – Pharmacy Student, JU.
3. Swapan Mahata (36 years) – School Teacher, English.
4. Prosenjit Ghosh (54 years) – Freelance Writer.

9. Examining of documents/News channels & portals:

In the course of collecting evidences and information on Various yellow journalism events happened over time regarding the Field of medicine and human ailment remedies, several visits

Were made to ‘The National Library’ and to the registered offices of the above aforementioned News Channels and Media Organizations.

9.1. Documents examined [4]:

1. Ananda bazaar Patrika Daily News Paper (Year 2000 – 2021)
2. Times of India Daily News Paper (Year 2000 – 2021)

3. India Today Periodic News Paper (Year 2000 – 2021)
4. Hindustan Times (Year 2000 – 2021)
5. The New York Times News Paper (Rare archives)
6. The New York Journal News Paper (Rare archives)
7. The Medicine Era (Monthly Magazine by The Telegraph)

9.2. News channels/portals followed [5]:

1. www.hindustantimes.com (Online Portal)
2. www.jdp.co.in (Online Portal – English)
3. www.timesofindia.com (Online News Paper – English)
4. www.indiatimes.com (Online Portal – English)
5. www.ndtv.com (Online Portal & Live TV)
6. www.abpananda.com (Online News Portal & Live TV)
7. www.aajtak.in (Online News Paper)
8. www.zeenews.india.com (Online Portal & Live TV)

A greater emphasis was laid on news mediums that operate in India, as this article is more or less based on the Indian market and Scenario [9]

10. Results:

After detailed studies by the means of Interviews, Surveys & Document Excavation and examination, the following results were obtained,

10.1. Interviews [6]:

During the interview sessions with the doctors, Pharmacists and journalists,

The doctors and the pharmacists were all universally asked to speak about their experience with journalists in regard of any medical news or interview, on the other hand the journalists were shown evidences of misleading news published over the studies span of time and were universally

asked about their personal opinions and experiences on the reasons of why often medical news or messages are conveyed improperly or unreally.

The lines quoted below are the individual significant excerpts from the whole conversations held with the Doctors, Pharmacists and the Journalists, *“When dealing with an inexperienced journalist, I often ask for the manuscript to proof read before publication of the newspaper or news, and they agree to the same but at times either they are close to deadlines or are difficult to manage”*

-Dr. Soumendra Saha (MBBS cal. – MD)

“There are different aims in both the professions, the aim of a doctor is to bring trustworthy and real news whereas on the other hand, the aim of a journalist or news channel is to get news no matter if it is real or unreal. We doctor often get a news that runs late often to which journalists are provided deadlines with, The journalist you are speaking with, if has got low knowledge about the medical science, chances exists that the message is conveyed much different than what you would intend”

-Dr. Bhaswarjyoti Saha (MBBS cal.)

“I would not comment on why, how or when news is being twisted or spiced up by news channels or organizations as I don’t hold much knowledge about that field but it’s for sure that you need to fix your own agenda on what message you want to convey through the media, regardless of whatever questions you get”

-Dr. Kiriti Saha (MBBS cal.)

“Being a dermatologist, I am always disturbed by how the media and advertisement agencies promote products of Magic Remedies. I won’t be able to talk about my experience with journalists, as being new in this profession (Medical Practice). I haven’t encountered any newspaper or media covering me. But one thing for sure is that you cannot change your complexion just by rubbing a cheap cream with a fancy name. Mostly I have encountered patients who are now suffering with serious skin ailments, on checking their background I found 80% of them being users of those cheap skin products currently or anytime in the past. If someone asks me or any other good dermatologist then I would be a big no to magic remedies”

-Dr. Sayantani Chakraborty (MBBS, MD, SCE in Dermatology)

“It is often that we pharmacists who work in R&D for one or the other pharma companies, need to face media and press whenever a new or modified drug or dosage form is to be addressed to the mass, there are instances as you have shown that the message, we want to convey gets twisted or tangled to some horrific extent due to various reasons unknown to me.

But the most important thing is that when I make a statement to the press, it’s not the journalist or the readers who will criticize me but it will be my fellow colleagues who will get me scrutinized if some of my statement intentionally or unintentionally goes beyond universal agreement. And if have got a tough time since the last press conference I appeared in where my statement was reversed just by the change of a word”

-Ritika Chakraborty (Novartis Pharmaceuticals – R&D)

“As a pharmacovigilance personnel, I get my duty to regularly check upon latest updates on the pharma world, which primarily includes news about new drug releases, discoveries, modifications etc.

In this context I have nothing to say about the press or media industry but the thing is that one day they tell you coffee is healthy, the otherday they tell you that tea is healthier and mostly there are important news on prevention, drugs and lifestyle that gets anonymously buried under the noise of this randomized articles.”

-Sumangal Dey(Pharmacovigilance, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals)

“Professionals who make headlines here don’t have the time and are scopeless when it comes to reading every work carefully, so they may make a wrong headline and this happens a little often”

-Arko Mukherjee(Senior Newspaper Editor, India Today)

“You may have full control over the statements you make and to that which are published, except the headlines. Headlines get dangerous at times as they are made in the last second”

-Rubina Liaqat(Senior Reporter, ABP Ananda)

“The smaller and shorter the space, the worse it gets. Most dangerous are the headline news. Medical Personnel should be very brief indiscussing medical topics when the space is too less and limited”

-Ria Das(Reporter, Hindustan Times)

“When it comes to featuring advertisements, whether it be something of magic remedies product or it be a simple soap or a talcum powder. Whatever the product maybe an advertisement is the way of monetary income. In earlier time’s media industry used to be different than what it is today. Today serving only news doesn’t pay off our bills, but clients do through advertisements. In this case we are bound to publish advertisements to get our business going”

-Suman Debnath(Editor, JDP News)

“It gets a hectic job when a target is fixed to publish 50 or 100 news articles per day, we generally don’t find a single scope where we can read any article from end to end. It is quite possible that often it happens that some headlines or introductory phases of some newsarticles get victimized of the very less time we get and adding to that, we stay in a bit hurry with headlines. Time doesn’t permit a secondary proof reading when it comes to headlines and sub-headlines”

-Sayani Nandi(Portal Department, Hindustan Times)

“Advertisements are the only source of income when it comes to a press/media house, serving hot topics and news articles don’t pay and neither did anytime in the past. So, advertising stays always on number one of our priority list. If client agrees with us on our policies, we are good to go then. Whatever the product is stays in our unconcerned list”

-Anjan Chowdhury(Advertising Head, ABP Ananda)

A significant finding from these interviews is the strong interest of scientists to interact with media representatives. Many of the respondents chose to contact media themselves. Nearly 20% report that they had contacted the media more than ten times a year, the main aim being either to shed light on their own research field, to create debate or to shape opinion. This could be a reflection of current changes in the ways people communicate in the digital era, with more possibilities to elucidate own opinions on different platforms. This is certainly interesting as both a field for further studies as well as a medium to investigate how these changes affect the form and content of medical information.

Adding to that the study shows that all of the respondents mainly spoke about the huge knowledge barrier between physicians and journalists. Secondly, another striking factor to the study is that most of the journalists spoke about their problems with huge workloads and constrained space and deadlines.

The main focus of the physicians was regarding the headlines and messages that were miscommunicated between what they actually wanted to convey with what readers were made to come across and also, they spoke about how low knowledge of some journalists affected their social connect. Where as to the journalists the main focus of the conversations were towards their problems that they face on a regular basis. Mistake regarding making of the headlines, Constrained deadlines and regarding the promotion of magic remedies or the drugs that make false claims, 2 of them said that it's a part of their money-making business, as news alone cannot fetch money to run an organization swiftly. Advertisers are the only source no matter what be the product or what be the subject, they publish advertisers looking at the packages the clients Offer. Hence, collectively these problems and barriers lead to misleading news and Yellow Journalism, not only in the sector of medicine and pharmacy but in all other sectors.

11. Surveys:

Surveyed candidates were mainly asked about their opinions about the drugs that are advertised in newspapers and online media which make false claim (e.g., fairness creams, Fat Burning Solutions, Height Growth Tablets etc.) and also, they were asked about their opinion on the various news that were aired amid the pandemic of COVID 19, about vaccines.

The excerpts of the significant words by the respondents are quoted below,

“Being in the teaching field of biology, I clearly know and understand that a 30rs cream cannot make your skin glow or to be precise they cannot give you a fair complexion. Moreover, during the pandemic newspapers felt like in competition of who can get updates about the vaccines faster, most of them which were false but yet attracted reader’s attention in the time being”

“Being a 3rd year pharmacy student, I know more or less facts about the pharmacy and the medicine world, in this regard there are often news or interviews that seem and read totally false and wrong but yet their ways of presentations are no doubt attractive which makes normal readers believe in whatever articles published, whether it be endorsement of magic remedy drugs or be those of which makes false claims, there was a time when we could more or less believe facts from news mediums about drugs, medicines and lifestyle. But in coming days I fear news mediums will get converted into mere sources of lies. Leaving all of that behind I feel pity for those who

still today trust everything shown in news media blindly”

-Raj Singh (22 Years)

12. Pharmacy student:

I am in this field of writing for the last two decades, quiet often I have been getting assignments from many renowned news channels to write articles for their newspapers. Till now I clearly know I wrote 17interview articles for newspapers, where daily interviews are held of doctors and physicians about fitness, lifestyle, prevention etc.

The thing that surprises me is that the organization’s primary instruction for me gets like, to find places within the article for any particular product endorsement and even they ask me to change certain statements of interviewed persons for their own beneficial intentions. Doing the same often changes the actual message of the featured person to something else, sometimes less harmful to sometimes severely harmful if relied and trusted blindly. I won’t lie buteven I did the same as they told at times, as my payments depend on how I please my clients. Ones I remember clearly, I was told to make afeatured doctor endorse a medicine that claimed to increase height growth, and the main part is, that the featured person didn’t even utteranything like that. If you ask for my opinion, I would strongly agree to the fact that journalists twist, mislead and spice up facts to match their own professional needs”

- Prosenjit Ghosh (54 Years)Freelance Content Writer

The survey study in this fact strongly adheres upon the fact that yellowjournalism is creeping in rapidly in cases of medical news.

The respondents have clearly agreed and also have experienced themselves, of how harmful it gets when sensitive and soft talked issues, like those of the medical and pharmacy industry gets themselves some misleading, and yet untrue shapes due to variousreasons persist in both the professions.

13. Conclusion:

After this detail research it can be conclude that there is a vast yet thin line to mix these two dimensions of pharmacy and yellow Journalism. Pharmacy is a welfare as well as a business model that need huge amount of advertisements or highlights but in some of thecases as here

mentioned those highlights become fake, scary, and hyper realistic and that's when the yellow Journalism take a move.

Now a day's kids even surf throughout media, newspapers and channels and it is now going to be difficult to reinforce their mind with the correct information cause they believe what they see in the media.

Many of the drugs are harmful when its consumptions are out of the control, in this kind of cases people need to be more sensitive and aware. We can see as daily commercials that the way they have made their advertisements for birth controls or protective lubricants are more of a kind provoking but still serves the purpose, and that is when yellow journalism take a small place in our mind in positive manner.

Sometimes it is necessary to add more Detail not just an eye catchy headline. We have to remember that pharmacy is not a joke; it can take someone's life if it is misleading.

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